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# AMERICA FACES THE BARRICADES



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**AMERICA  
FACES  
THE  
BARRICADES**

**JOHN L. SPIVAK**

**COVICI • FRIEDE • PUBLISHERS • NEW YORK**

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*TO ROBERT W. DUNN*

I am indebted to the editors of the *New Masses*  
for permission to reprint sections of this book  
which first appeared in its pages.

J. L. S.

## P R E F A C E

AFTER talking with all kinds of people throughout the country, I am convinced that the American worker does not want to overthrow the government. All he wants is food. But if the government will not make it possible for him to earn it or will not give it to him, then he will overthrow the government, without realizing that he is doing so.

Under the present economic system it is impossible for our farms and factories ever to absorb all the millions of unemployed. The tendency, since the curtailment of the working hours, has been for manufacturers to mechanize their plants more highly in order to make up for the reduced working hours where they cannot be made up by the "speed-up" system. Thus, for years, millions will be permanently on relief rolls, whom the government will have to support, since private charity can no longer do it.

Where will the government get the money? It can raise taxes, pass an unemployment-insurance bill, or inflate the currency. Since the very purpose of our economic system is profit, employers may be expected to oppose anything that tends to cut into their profits, such as higher taxes; in the event of unemployment insurance, we may expect that the sum to be set aside for this purpose will be taken out of the workers' pay envelopes, thus adding to the irritation of an already irritated people.

We already have a modified form of inflation in the 59-cent dollar and the embargo on gold. The use of silver is yet to come. When silver as an inflationary measure is exhausted, then the printing of paper money is inevitable.

Historically, there has never been a period of inflation

where wages were able to keep up with the rise in the cost of living; hence we may expect additional misery for the great masses of people. More will be driven to the relief rolls.

Feeding the people is a concession to the hungry made by capitalism, which the government represents. The C.W.A., for instance, was a realization by political leaders that the restlessness of the hungry had reached the danger point of open revolt. When this danger passed, the government liquidated the C.W.A., and set up in its stead enough distribution to quiet the most hungry. The vast sums required to feed the unemployed cannot be spent indefinitely without bringing on the next inflationary step, and this the government obviously wishes to avoid until after the next Presidential election.

Politically, the function of both Democratic and Republican parties is the preservation of the profit system. The Socialist party is taking little aggressive part in struggles for the people, and actually seems to be a reef to break the rising sea of unrest washing towards the capitalist shores.

I think that the capitalist system in this country still has some distance to go before it falls. There are still many more concessions which a capitalist government can grant its workers, and these will be granted more and more, in proportion to the depths of misery and hunger into which the people fall. When the government can grant no more concessions to appease its hungry, then revolt on a national scale will be inevitable, with its ensuing chaos, during which some group, knowing what it wants to do, will seize control. At present the only political party which seems to know what it wants is the Communist Party.

It is obvious that we are in for a period of more and more concessions secured after bitter struggles between workers and the armed forces of the state. Revolts by small property-owners and by hungry unemployed will occur, as they have already occurred, in areas where politicians are not suffi-



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ciently alert to gauge the temper of the people and grant concessions before the seething unrest breaks out in overt acts.

All in all, I returned from my survey convinced that we are in for a period of great unrest, organized and unorganized revolts and bloodshed; a period, I think, which will continue until the present economic system has been completely changed.

J. L. S.



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# AMERICA FACES THE BARRICADES



## A LETTER TO THE PRESIDENT

Fresno, Calif.

Dear Mr. President:

I don't suppose you will ever see this but I am writing to you to keep a promise I made to a little fifteen-year-old Mexican girl. She wanted to write to you because she had heard you were doing things for poor workers. She didn't write because she did not have three cents for a stamp and because she never went to school to learn how to write. Her earliest memories are of wandering about in an old, rattling, wheezing Ford from vegetable field to fruit field, from fruit field to vegetable field, and you can't go to school if your father is always following the rich, productive earth and needs your labor in the fields as soon as you are seven or eight years old.

I cannot give you her name because when I told her I would write to you for her she became frightened and pleaded with me not to mention her name. She was afraid maybe you'd write the boss and her family would be denied the privilege of working in the fields all day for thirty-five cents. She said it was all right to tell where she lived so I'll tell you how you can find her.

Just take the main highway from Fresno to Mendota which is about thirty miles away and turn west at Mendota for about four miles. You can't miss it because you'll see a big sign: "Land of Milk and Honey." When you've passed this sign you'll see against the horizon a cluster of houses and when you come to the sign "Hotchkiss Ranch—Cotton Pickers Wanted," turn up the side road a few hundred yards beyond the comfortable farm house with its barns

and cotton shelters. There's a row of fifteen outhouses along the road. That's where the migratory workers and this little girl live, Mr. President.

There are two more outhouses a little way from these and those are the ones actually used for outhouses. You can tell that by the odor and the swarms of flies that hover around these two especially. This is a typical migratory workers' camp, only some have five outhouses for the workers and some have thirty. It depends upon the size of the farm.

You'll recognize a migratory workers' camp because each outhouse—"home," they call it out here—is made of plain wooden boards dried by years of tropical sun. The doors are wide open and if you will look inside you'll see that some of them have a board floor but most of them do not; in some you'll find a rickety iron bedstead with a dirty old mattress and an equally dirty old blanket or two, a box for a table and another for a chair; and perhaps in some, a pot and a kettle or two over a wood-burning stove.

The little girl lives in the third house from the front as you approach. You can't miss it. It has a large sign tacked on the door: SCARLET FEVER.

But don't worry about that, because the health authorities here are not worrying. They just tacked up the sign on this outhouse door and on that one there near the end of the row and went away. They didn't tell anyone to be careful about a contagious disease because that might have the camp quarantined and the whole crop lost to the farmer, for all the cotton pickers and their children have been in that outhouse. I don't image it's very dangerous though, for only two more children have caught it. If it had been dangerous I'm sure the health authorities would have warned them.

In this outhouse where a baby girl has scarlet fever you'll find an iron bedstead. That's where the baby sleeps, the one that's tossing around in fever while the mother tries to shoo the flies away. The other six in this family



sleep on the floor, huddled together: father, mother, two grown brothers, a little brother and the fifteen-year-old-girl. They sleep like most everybody else in the camp: on the floor.

That barrel and rusty milk can in the corner of the room where everybody sleeps on the floor hold the water they bring from Mendota to cool the child's fever. It is four miles to Mendota and four miles back and eight miles costs a little for gas so they have to be very sparing with the water. That's why they all look so dirty—it's not because they don't like to wash. It's because it costs too much to get water—water needed for cooking and drinking. You can't waste water just washing yourself when it costs so much to get. After all, when you make thirty-five cents for a full day's work and spend some of that for gas to get water it leaves you that much less for food, you know.

The mother isn't in the field today because the baby is pretty sick and those children playing in and out of the houses marked with SCARLET FEVER signs are too young to go into the field but everyone else is there. That's where I found the little girl for whom I am writing this letter.

Perhaps I had better tell you exactly how I found her and what we talked about so you can understand just what she wants. It would be a big favor, she said, and she would be very grateful.

She doesn't mind picking cotton bolls for thirty-five cents a day and she doesn't mind the filth and dirt and starvation, but she is worried about that electric light in the shack. You noticed it, didn't you? The one with the dusty bulb right in the middle of the outhouse they live in? Well, you have to pay twenty-five cents a week if you want to use that electric light and twenty-five cents is a lot of money when you get only thirty-five cents a day and you need that twenty-five cents for food and for gas for the car so you can go get water.

It's not that she wants the light at night. She and her family got along without it but you see they've discovered that it's awfully hard to tend the sick baby in the darkness. And it's always dark when the baby seems to cry the most. And in addition, this little girl is worried about herself. She is going to have a baby and suppose it comes at night and there is no light? She is going to have a baby in this little outhouse where her mother and father and brothers live, this little outhouse with the sign SCARLET FEVER over its door.

What she wanted to ask you is if you could possibly get in touch with somebody and have them not charge them twenty-five cents for the use of the electric light—especially when somebody's sick or expecting a baby. It's not so bad when you're well but it's awfully hard when you have a little sick sister tossing and crying and you yourself are expecting a baby.

I explained to this little girl that you would understand about her not being so moral. She is such a frail little thing, working so hard in the fields all day and you know after you get through working and you just don't know what to do with yourself and your youth just cries out to forget the days that have gone and the long years that stretch ahead of you, well—you sort of forget that maybe it isn't just quite moral to have a baby when you're not quite fifteen.

I told the little girl that you had a daughter, too, grown up now, of course, and she thought that if your girl had gotten into trouble when she was fifteen that you wouldn't have liked her to have a baby in a little wooden outhouse with another baby tossing in fever and no light to see anything by. I told her I didn't think you would either, and so, sitting there in the cotton field in this "Land of Milk and Honey," she cried.

But I started to tell you what we talked about and here I've gone telling you what she wanted me to write. You see,

when I walked out in the field, there was this little girl dragging a huge sack along the furrow, and stuffing the brown bolls into it. She looked so tired, so weary, and then I noticed that she was with child.

"How old are you?" I asked.

She looked up and smiled pleasantly.

"Fifteen."

"Working in the fields long?"

"Uh-uh."

"How old were you when you started?"

She shrugged her shoulders. "Dunno. Maybe eight. Maybe nine. I dunno."

"What do you make a day?"

"Sometimes in first picking, dollar and a half. We get seventy-five cents a hundred. Used to get sixty cents, but Red Agitators got us fifteen cents raise. But for third picking get only forty cents a hundred and there ain't so much to pick."

You may be interested in her phrase "red agitators." That's what the Communists are called here by the newspapers, so now everybody calls a Communist a "red agitator." This little girl didn't know what a "red agitator" was; she knew only that "red agitators" got them a raise of fifteen cents on the hundred pounds by organizing them and calling a strike.

Thirty thousand out of the 250,000 agricultural workers in California have taken out cards in the Communist union. They call it the Cannery and Agricultural Workers' Union. And most of the 30,000 are from the 100,000 migratory workers—those who live in camps like this little girl. They don't pay dues often, but they carry their cards and they are strong on organization and very militant, especially the Mexicans.

You probably read in the papers about the fruit and vegetable pickers' strikes in the Imperial Valley and around

Sacramento and Alameda and in the San Joaquin Valley right here in Tulare and Kern counties. There's been violence and killings, but the strikes were almost always won. That's because the workers felt a lot like this little girl: no matter what happened it couldn't be worse than it was. If the Communists would help them, then they would be Communists. Nobody else seemed to care for them, nobody ever tried to organize them until the "red agitators" came. Business men and bankers and farmers are terrified by "red agitators"; you understand why, of course, when you read this letter that the little girl wanted me to write to you.

"Last year when red agitators make strike in Tulare and get seventy-five cents a hundred so we get seventy-five cents here, too," she added laughing.

Her father, a tall, dark-skinned man with a week's growth of black beard saw me talking to her and came over.

"Somet'ing wrong, eh?" he asked.

"No. Nothing wrong. Just talking to your daughter. I want to find out how much you people make a week."

A slow smile spread over his features.

"We make nodding," he said definitely.

"How much?"

"Me, my wife, my girl here. Last week we work from Monday to Thursday night and make two-fifty—all of us."

"Your daughter is only fifteen. I thought there was a law against child labor."

He shrugged his shoulders.

"Nobody come here. All children work in field soon big enough. Only time man come here is when put up sign 'Scarlet Fever.' Nobody care."

"Things any better now than they were last year or two years ago?"

"No. No better. Lots worse. Last year we buy hundred pound cheapest flour for two-forty-five. Now I pay three-ten same kind. Before President make NRA I make more money



dan I make now. Made lots more in '32, less in '33, in '34 hardly don't make noddin'g."

"I thought you fellows got a raise for picking cotton?"

"Yes. But we no get it. We make strike before get it. Red agitators. They make for us."

"How about before the depression?"

"Good times. Get one-fifty a hundred. Very bad now. Yes, sir. Very bad."

"Now that you've finished picking these acres what do you do?"

"Go to peas fields. Everybody go in car or truck. We take everything except house. We get noddin'g but house when we come. When finished peas fields we come back here for grapes."

"What do you make a week when the whole family is working? In good times?"

"In good times? Oh, sometimes make \$8, maybe if work very hard, make \$10."

That seemed to be the height of his earnings and he sounded very pleased that he and his family were able on occasions to earn that much.

"Well, I got to go back pick bolls." He said something to the girl in Spanish. She flushed and started picking again.

"My father he say better work," she said.

"Yes; well, you go ahead and work while I walk alongside and talk with you. Are you married?"

She flushed again and shook her head.

"No. No marry."

"Looks like things are not so good for you people, eh?"

"Oh, they awright. Things gettin' better—everybody say. The President, he take care of poor people."

"Is he taking care of you?"

"No, sir. Not yet. Things very bad for us. But he got lots to do and he never hear about cotton pickers. I wanted write and tell him hurry up because I going to have a baby

and things very bad for us. He do something for poor people if he know how things very bad, eh?"

"Why didn't you write to him, then?"

She blushed again and bent swiftly to a cotton stalk.

"No got stamp."

"Oh," I said. "I'll give you a stamp."

"Thank you, but no can write."

"Sure, you go ahead. The President will be glad to hear from you."

"No can write," she repeated. "No go school; work in fields all the time."

"If you'll tell me what you want to write, I'll do it for you."

She looked at me with a swift smile and giggled.

"No. I just talk. The President no bother about Mexican girl."

"Maybe, but what do you want to tell him?"

I took out a pencil and some paper and asked her name. A look of terror spread over her face.

"No! No! No write the President," she begged.

"Why not? Didn't you want to write to him?"

"No! No! I just talk. Just talk."

"What are you afraid of?"

"No write the President, mister, please." She straightened up and looked at me pleadingly. "If you write for me to the President my father get in trouble. Maybe the President get mad and my father, he not get no more work."

"I don't think so," I assured her. "But if you don't want me to tell who you are, I can write to him and tell him about it without mentioning your name."

She looked up with a sudden hope.

"You do that?"

"Sure. I don't have to give your name. I'll just say a little Mexican girl in a cotton field near Mendota."

She looked earnestly at me for a moment.

"Please, you write the President. Tell him my baby is coming," she said in a low tone. "I dunno when the baby come. Maybe at night and we got no light. Please, you tell the President things very bad. We no make maybe nothing. My little sister she sick and if baby come I no can have bed. I got to have baby on floor and if it come in night, how I have baby?"

I nodded, unable to speak.

"You please tell the President maybe he tell boss here not charge us twenty-five cents a week for electric light so I can have my baby."

"I'll tell him exactly what you said," I promised.

"You no fool me?"

"No, I'm not fooling you. I promise."

That is all, Mr. President. I don't know whether you will ever see this but I just wanted to keep my promise; and if you do see it, you'll know why people are beginning to listen to "red agitators."

JOHN L. SPIVAK.





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## THE LOWER DEPTHS

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### I. BLUE HEAVEN

I WAS sitting with my back to the door of the small, cold room on the third floor of 202½ North Tyron Street, where the Charlotte, N. C., Labor Union has its headquarters, talking with several men, when I became aware of a dry, hacking cough mingled with a rasping noise. The door was open and I turned in time to see a thin scrawny Negro top the stairs. He clung to the bannister and stood there, his mouth open in an agony of pain while that weird sound issued from his mouth. He reminded me of someone I had seen somewhere, and in a flash I remembered an assignment I once had in a war veterans' hospital where men who had been gassed were being treated. There was that same drawn face, the same look in this Negro's eyes that I remembered in those soldiers whose lungs had been burned out by poison gas.

Suddenly he began to cough. He bent forward and quickly pulled a soiled handkerchief out of his old coat pocket. He held it to his mouth. When he took it away it was filled with blood.

I thought I was seeing a man in the last stages of tuberculosis, but one of the union men said casually:

"Asbestos mill. They don't live long once they go to work there."

The Negro finally caught his breath and with a weak smile slumped into a chair one of the men pushed toward him.

"Thank you, sir. It's gettin' harder all the time makin' them stairs," he said in that peculiar, rasping voice. "I done come to see Mist' Jackson. Y'all expect him here?"

"He'll be here d'reckly," someone said.

I wanted to ask what the union man meant when he said they did not live long when they go to work in an asbestos mill, but you can't ask a man who is dying how long he thinks he will live; and while I was trying to find out without being too brutal, another man said:

"See this nigger? Four months ago he was as husky as a truck driver. Look at him now. Probably ain't got more'n half a year to live now."

The coughing Negro nodded his head in agreement.

"How do you mean?" I asked.

"You get lent from the asbestos in your lungs an' you're done for. Ain't nothin' nobody can do about it. Gets you a hemorrhage, that's what it gets you. Why, if you get a little splinter under your finger, unless it's cut out, it just forms a hard knot like a brick an' stays there. I figure that's what happens when it gets in your lungs, too. Strong white folks workin' in dem mills can live five to seven years but us niggers breaks quick."

"That's right," one of the men said casually, squirting a mouthful of tobacco juice into a battered spittoon. "I seen lots of them die."

"Why did you take the job?"

"Had to get some kind of work."

"Didn't you know it was dangerous?"

He nodded slowly. "Nothin' else to do. People go to work there only 'cause they have to. I had to," he added simply.

Albert L. Jackson, business agent for the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America, came in. He was labor's representative on the local NRA Compliance Board.

The Negro rose. "I done come to tell you, Mist' Jackson, 'bout this here asbestos mill. They's sho' stretchin' us out."

"Yeah, I know. What are you doing here? You look pretty sick?"

"Yes, sir. I been down to the health department and I figured as how I'd stop off an' tell you before I went home."

The Negro walked out. We followed him with our eyes.

"That's the stretch-out system for you," said Jackson indignantly. "And now they're working it in the asbestos mills. Those mills haven't lost anything by the code. They're getting their money's worth of work out of them."

"I thought you were on the compliance board," I said suggestively.

"I am, but I'm only one man. And now this nigger. Why, there's one case before the board where the asbestos plant, before the code went into effect, used to run one side of one twisting machine and pay \$18 a week. This was considered a good day's work. Now, under the code, the worker is forced to run both sides of the machine for \$15 a week. In other words, the worker is now getting \$15 for \$36 worth of work. That's the way it is in all mills. It's especially bad in an asbestos mill, because if you work there any length of time you've signed your death warrant."

I left him and went to the Charlotte Health Department.

"What about asbestos mill workers?" I asked Dr. G. L. Rey, the city health officer.

He shook his head. "They can't last more than five to seven years if they're white. Then they die. They last as long as seven years, don't they, Dr. Hand?"

He turned to another physician sitting across the desk from him.

"I don't know. I've heard of some cases that lasted that long. Most of 'em don't. Niggers sure don't."

"How do you mean?"

"You see," Dr. Rey explained, "the nigra seems to be naturally disposed to tuberculosis. He is more subject to it than the white man. And as for asbestosis—that's the medical term for his disease—nigras can't stand even a fraction of the time a white man can. Once it gets into your lungs there's nothing anyone can do about it. It just stays there until the lung becomes infected and that's the end. Why, I had a nigra here this morning. He hadn't been in the asbestos mill more than three or four months and he's finished now."

"How about masks?"

"I wrote to the U. S. Public Health Service and the Department of Agriculture. I urged local officials here to pass an ordinance or a state bill to make the mills supply masks to the workers. Nothing's come of it. Might cost the mill-owners a few dollars."

From Dr. Rey I learned that the sick man lived in Blue Heaven, one of the four decrepit areas where Negroes live in Charlotte. Like the others, it begins on the outskirts of the city, where the pavement ends. The red, rutted clay road leads to the homes in Blue Heaven, board shacks resting on brick pillars ranged in rows like bath houses at a northern beach.

Children were playing on the road and a mother, holding a sleeping baby, sat on the steps of her shack, staring expressionless at the distant railroad tracks. Men in old blue-denim overalls eyed me curiously.

I stopped one and asked if he knew where the man who worked in the asbestos mill lived.

"Lots of us work in the asbestos mill."

"I mean the one who's pretty sick. He was down the Health Department today."



"Oh. You goin' to take him away?"

"No. I just want to talk with him."

"Well, he lives right in that yellow house yonder, near the top o' the hill."

There were three sparsely furnished rooms running railroad fashion in the Negro's house. The board walls inside were as bare and depressing as the faded boards outside. His wife and two ragged boys looked fearfully at me. They had heard "a hemorrhage was catchin'" and were afraid I was from the Health Department, come to take him away, but the sick man recognized me. He sat in an old chair holding the same bloody handkerchief to his mouth.

News had spread swiftly that a white man had come to see him and Negroes passed, staring at the house.

"What do you expect to live on now?"

"I don't know. Maybe the Salvation Army'll give us something to eat."

His voice alternated between that horrible rasp and a dry cackle.

It is strange what a difference it makes in a man's attitude when he has nothing to hope for, when he knows he is dying and there is no reprieve. He talked frankly, plainly, about the mill, the Negroes who are forced to work there because whites avoid it like the plague; of the threats to discontinue charity if he did not take the asbestos mill job; of the stretch-out since the government stepped in. . . .

"There's white folks workin' there, too. Them charity organizations don't care who they send when a mill says it wants hands."

"Don't they kick?"

He smiled wryly. "No, sir. That's the funny thing about these here white folks. They never kick about nothin'."

"I tol' him not to work in that mill," his wife said helplessly.

"We'd a-starved if I hadn't," he said.

"Why aren't the children in school?"

"One ain't got no clothes. All he's got's them overalls like you see an' no shoes. An' the other ain't got no school books. They got to buy their own books if they want to go to school. The city don't give nobody nothin'."

We sat for a long time talking. A freight train loaded with textiles and asbestos rattled past. The mills were working full shifts. Business was picking up, everybody said cheerfully . . . and this Negro was sitting there waiting to die.

"Why do they call this Blue Heaven?"

"I don't know. They jes' calls it that."

He was silent for a while. Then he added; "Maybe it's because everybody's blue. I know I'm blue."

It was dark when I walked down the scarred road from Blue Heaven where everybody's blue.

There was not an area that I visited which did not have a Blue Heaven of its own, where the unskilled worker lives out his days in incredible poverty, eating the crusts given him by government charity, sick, despairing, gaunt and helpless. Whether black or white, native American or foreign born, these untrained and often ignorant men and their families are huddled in the slums of every village, not knowing what to do or where to turn except to stretch anguished hands for a bit of bread.

Always living precariously, the unskilled worker was the first to be thrown on the charity list the moment he lost his job or when old age made him useless to his employer. With the coming of the depression, millions of unskilled were thrown out of work and those who could find odd jobs worked at wages so drastically reduced, that even when they worked they got little more than charity would have given them.

The position of the millions of Negroes and the thousands of imported, foreign-born laborers, like the Mexican mi-

gratory workers on the West Coast, is literally tragic. In the industrial centers particularly, the Negro is ignored except for hard, low-paid jobs, and generally both city and labor officials are indifferent as to how the Negro lives. When you ask them what the black man does for a living, they shrug their shoulders, rather surprised that anyone should be interested.

"Oh, anything, I guess. Odd jobs, mostly."

"What does he average in weekly earnings?"

"I don't know."

No one seems to know or care. The Negroes themselves do not know how they manage to eke out an existence. You stop Negroes and ask them how they are getting along.

"Pretty bad. Pretty bad," is the invariable answer.

"How do you live?"

"The Department of Welfare gives us somethin' and pays our rent. We got four in our family. I can't get work nohow."

"What did you do before?"

"Oh, I worked about. Never did have a steady job for years. Can't get no steady job."

And as one Negro expressed it to me in the South:

"It costs a nigger as much to eat as a white man. Dey ain't no difference in de sizes o' de bellies. Niggers got big bellies and little bellies—jes' like white folks. An' when we cain' fill 'em we's hongry an' when we's hongry we's hongry!"

They work wherever and whenever they can find it—in stores, in small two-by-four manufacturing establishments—the hardest, dirtiest, most menial work, the kind of work the Pole and Italian, Jew and Lithuanian refuse.

In the Southern industrial area, labor is drawn from the neighboring land, especially from the share-croppers, who for decades have worked hard and grown accustomed to getting little or nothing at the end of the season. The Chamber

of Commerce in Charlotte, for instance, still advertises that "there is an unlimited supply of farm labor to draw from, labor willing to work on an open-shop basis, and with no un-American ideals."

For decades, these descendants of the earliest settlers had been brow-beaten by landlords, cheated, starved, and given as little as possible. If they did not like it they could move, and apparently the psychology of those fated to be walked upon seeped into their blood. Children grew up knowing nothing else but to accept what was given them. Oppressed and cringing, the native American in this area is a pathetic spectacle, accepting whatever crumb is thrown him and clinging to a sense of loyalty to his employer.

"You know, it's against the code," they say to one another about the stretch-out, and then go on working with scarcely a protest.

The mills raised rents for the company-owned hovels because "wages were raised," and there is not a peep out of the workers.

In the asbestos mill where it means a horrible death to work for any length of time, no masks are provided to save their lives—and no one opens his mouth.

The custom of firing Negroes to hire white men for the same job is common throughout the whole country. Worse off than even the Negro in Southern cities and Northern industrial centers are the West Coast migratory workers. I had always thought that the shacks in which black and white share-croppers live were the last word in squalor and degradation, but I shall never think that again after seeing how the migratory workers live.

I can understand why Communist organizers are making headway among them and why the West Coast is in the throes of a hysterical anti-red drive because of organizing activities. "You have nothing to lose but your chains" is more than just a slogan there. I could not see what they



could lose—living the lives they do in the filthy, disease-breeding outhouses the landowners call “homes.” These workers feel the depths of their misery and once they get a little power into their hands, as when they are organized, it goes to their heads. The greatest difficulty Communist organizers have is keeping them from acts of violence, especially the Mexicans. So far as I could see, the real feat the Communists performed is not in organizing them but in keeping them in line once they were organized.

I visited seven migratory workers’ camps in the San Joaquin Valley and they vary but slightly. So dreadful are they that the white worker, the depression’s contribution to the migratory class, avoids them whenever possible. If the white worker can possibly scrape up enough money for a tent for himself and his family before he takes to the road, he does so and thus avoids the outhouses farmers build to shelter them while they pick the crop.

I talked with native white Americans who started out to live independently like that, but many had been on the road for two or three years. Their tents wore out and they never earned enough to buy new ones. They were driven into camp life and it is only a matter of time before they, too, will be lost with the rest of the hundred thousand who wander the California valleys—unless through organization they can change their earning power and working conditions.

When the migratory worker, dressed in the cast-off clothes given him by charity, comes upon the scene where he is to harvest the crop, the outhouse is bare. Nothing is supplied, not even a wood-burning stove for cooking. The family that wants to cook must carry its own stove. Whatever “furnishings” are found in an outhouse is the worker’s. He carries it with him in his rattling car wherever he goes—to the cotton fields, the pea fields, the grape fields—the whole long weary round of trudging from farm to farm for a few days’ or a few weeks’ work to keep from starving.

The furnishings are picked up in junk yards or begged from charity organizations and invariably consist of a few incredibly filthy blankets, a few boxes for chairs, and a table. The more opulent of them have an iron bedstead and perhaps a mattress for the head of the family to sleep on or for the children when they are sick, a pot and a pan, perhaps a tin dish or two, a barrel or milk can for water, and that is all.

Why the death rate is not higher than it is I do not know. Sickness is quite common, and few care anything about a sick Mexican migratory worker. A sick person is entitled to county attention if he is a county resident, but these wandering, lost people are not residents of any place. They enter a hospital only in extreme cases. They have a horror of going to hospitals, for it usually means death, because only the critically ill can occasionally get into hospitals.

Their earnings, too, are incredible. A whole family, father, mother and children, working in the fields from nine in the morning until they are told to quit, which is usually near sundown, can earn seven or eight dollars a week if it is a good week; otherwise, the average is closer to five dollars. I saw children of eight picking cotton—the same children who will go on to other fields to pick peas, grapes, lettuce. The law says they must go to school, but most of the children are only registered at the local school near which a family works for a few weeks. That is for the records should anyone become too inquisitive. Usually, they cannot go to school. As a rule, it is too far from the camp and the few cents the father earns cannot be spent for gas and oil to take his children to school and back.

If you ask county officials they will tell you that all migratory workers' children go to school. See—here are their registrations. But if you go into the fields, you will see the only school they ever get to.

From among the religious leaders, Catholic priests are

about the only ones interested in the migratory workers and their interest is confined to charitable aid and spiritual advice. As for alleviating the living and working conditions, the Catholic priest is as silent as the Protestant minister. It is only once in a while that some earnest minister, stumbling upon a migratory camp, sees things he did not dream existed. Local newspapers are silent: only occasionally, when someone whom they cannot ignore writes to them about these matters do they publish it. Then they let it go at that. The Fresno *Bee* published such a letter while I was there—the only item I saw in any paper—and that only because a minister from Parlier, Cal., the Rev. E. Alexander Gray, became apoplectic when he stumbled upon a camp.

I quote the letter. It gives an accurate picture.

“Let anyone visit the camps for cotton pickers on the west side of Fresno County if he has any doubts as to the reality of hell. Dante must have had a vision of these camps when he portrayed the Inferno. If you want to know his Satanic Majesty, ask the slave herders to introduce you to the chief executive of the finance corporation.

“Is there any reason why individuals farming more than twenty sections of fertile land should subject human beings to treatment unbecoming even a dog? One camp which this fall housed more than 600 men, women and children in squalid tents, had less than half a dozen water outlets, not a bath or wash house, one cold shower under the water tank (now out of order) and only five dirty, stinking outside toilets. Not even the poorest poor want to live in such a hell.

“I thought child labor was abolished until I visited the cotton fields; I know better now. I talked with the men—strong, willing and able-bodied men. Four of the best had that day picked a total of 700 pounds of cotton for which they were paid 40 cents a hundred pounds. Yes, for the day's toil they received 70 cents a piece. The next day it



rained and they could live on the soupy mud of the cotton camp. If that wouldn't make a Communist out of one it would make him an anarchist.

"The American Legion is worried about agitators. I suggest that the American Legion begin its Americanization at one of these camps."

No one had ever bothered to organize these migratory workers in recent years. The American Federation of Labor does not consider them a craft nor steady dues-paying members, and consequently ignores them. It was not until Communists began to organize them that California developed the "red jitters" and gave birth to real fascist bodies. So far as the workers themselves are concerned, if they lose a few weeks' work due to striking, they are not much worse off than they were before. As the migratory worker expresses it:

"Sure, what we got to lose?"

News that by organizing they could and did achieve wage advances, spread among them after the first few strikes were won. By their very wanderings, the word spread, and under Communist leadership, migratory workers won numerous strikes. This record of victories left its effect upon other fields, with the result that unions like long-shoremen and other A. F. of L. bodies now view Communist activities with a sympathetic eye.

"I'm not a radical," C. E. Dowd, president of the Fresno Labor Council, told me. "But I don't know what those poor devils would do without the Communists. They're the only ones trying to do anything for them."

The migratory worker knows nothing about Communism or Communists. He knows only that "red agitators" organize strikes and win a little more money for them. There is a charming incident I heard which illustrates the point:

An organizer who had been active in the San José fields approached a group of Mexican migratory workers and

talked union to them till the sweat dripped from his face. The workers listened apathetically.

"Got to be organized," they finally told him.

"That's right," he said hopefully. "I'm an organizer from the Cannery and Agricultural Workers' Union—"

"No," they said, determinedly.

The organizer argued more but could not budge them.

"You want to be organized, don't you?" he finally asked desperately.

"Yes. Sure."

"That's what I'm trying to do."

"No good. We want Agricultural Union. Want organizer from San José Union."

They did not know that this organizer had organized the San José union. They did not know that the San José union was part of the Agricultural Workers' Union. They did not know that it was Communist-led. They knew only that the San José union had been well organized, had won an increase, and that was what they wanted.

## II. BITTER BREAD

THE growth of destitution throughout the country can be gauged by totaling the number who are today getting full or partial relief. There are no complete figures, but those which are available, are appalling. In the areas I visited, which comprise a fairly accurate cross-section of the country, I found that charity applicants had increased anywhere from six to twenty-four times, and in no place did I get the complete figures.

The difficulty in forming an accurate picture of the extent of destitution lies in the many different ways charity records are kept. Some cities have their Community Chests, others Family Service, Red Cross, Salvation Army—the whole long list of them. In some cities, these various groups cooperate, while in others church groups, like Catholic charities, remain aloof. In some, county and city expenditures are carried in the same books; in others, the listing is not by individuals or families but by the amount of food distributed. Frequently, in the latter cases, not even the head of the charity organization can tell whether the increase in tonnage means a more generous allowance of food or more applicants. But everywhere, the number of families appealing for aid and the sums expended have increased so tremendously that no one who sees the figures can escape the realization that there is a greater proportion of our population on the Starvation Roll than government spokesmen or even the Communist Party estimate.

In Brockton, Mass., a “union-labor” community where charity applications reached staggering figures after the bank crashes, I talked with several women who were waiting at the

city hall to plead for food and assurance that they would not be evicted.

"How long can this last?" I asked, "this pleading for charity?"

"I don't know," one of the women said tonelessly.

"What will you do if you can't get charity any more—if things don't pick up?"

"I don't know," she repeated.

"What will you do when you don't get any more charity?"

"Starve to death, I guess."

"And your children?"

"They ain't goin' to starve to death," she said tensely.

"I don't know what I'll do, but they ain't goin' to starve to death. Everything'll be all right. Maybe the President will pull us out of this."

"Maybe the President will pull us out of this." Everywhere I heard that hopeful, almost prayerful repetition. At first it was with certainty: "The President will pull us out of this." But as the NRA failed and destitution increased, the sense of certainty changed to "Maybe he will pull us out." In their bewilderment, they still look hopefully to Washington. The NRA and the governments' other multitudinous experiments did nothing for them, but there is nothing else they know they can do except cling to their despairing hope that a man sitting in Washington will pull them out.

"And suppose he doesn't?" you ask.

"I don't know. I don't know," they keep repeating.

In some cities, as in Charlotte, the crying hunger for bread is being used by those distributing it to lower what little wages those out of work might earn. Until 1933, when the government stepped into the picture, charity was collected and distributed by private agencies like Family Service and the Salvation Army. After 1933, the government has used not only its own relief organization but those



agencies already established, and the latter, operating with government money, supply skilled and unskilled workers not only to private employers but on government projects, at nominal relief wages. When a man wants his house painted or a little carpenter work done, he naturally calls a painter or a carpenter and the skilled worker asks the union wage-scale.

"Why should I pay that when I can get a man from the Family Service or the Salvation Army for a dollar a day?" the prospective employer asks.

These charity organizations believe in "helping a man maintain his self-respect by giving him work instead of charity." As a result, employers who would have to pay five or six dollars for a day's work get a competent man from a charity organization at a nominal wage. If the worker refuses to work for a dollar a day at his own trade, which calls for a dollar an hour, the charity officials say that he does not really want work and is consequently "unworthy of receiving further aid." The charity dependent is thus given his choice of lowering the general wage-level or getting no food for himself and his hungry family.

Most applicants in this region are mill-workers and unskilled laborers. The latter class—and three out of every four in Charlotte are unskilled—never earned enough to save much and felt the pinch of hunger the moment the job was lost. Private charity contributions kept them alive, but when the number became too great, the "Queen City of the South," as it proudly calls itself, washed its hands of the workers who had built it. Charlotte, as a city, does not contribute one cent towards the relief of the countless number of hungry in "this land where wealth awaits you."

In New Orleans, "the Joyland of America," where every fourth person is listed as utterly destitute, the food allowance decreased considerably during the past two years and is still decreasing.



"This town is in a bad situation," Julius Goldman, director of the Community Chest, said in explaining why the Chest could not raise sufficient funds for the relief work. "About 155 million dollars are frozen in the banks, which crashed. We tried to start a work-relief program. We found work for 99 percent of the applicants. At first, we paid them \$2.50 a day but we had to drop that to \$1.50. Usually they worked four days or less. Naturally this was not sufficient to keep a family going and we supplemented this by direct food relief."

"Didn't this work-relief tend to reduce the wage-scale of workers all around?"

"Oh, we had the president of the Central Trades and Labor Council on our board to safeguard such things," Mr. Goldman said quickly.

"But even with him there to safeguard things, didn't skilled union men go to work at their trades which called for \$1 an hour for \$1.50 a day?"

"Well—they had to eat," Mr. Goldman protested.

"How many small business men are applying for charity now?"

"I don't know. Quite a number, I should say off hand. When they are forced out of business, the only thing left for them is to get a job and since there are no jobs they have to turn to charity."

"How many families have doubled up since the depression?"

"I haven't any figures on that but it has been quite common. I should say a tremendous number—those who have lost their own homes, those without jobs, and so on."

In Tulsa, "the richest city per capita in the world," one out of every six persons is registered with the Community Fund for his day's bread. Many school children do not have anything to eat at lunch time. How many more are destitute than are kept alive by the charities, no one knows. This

figure is only for those receiving direct food supplies from the Family Service, an affiliate of the Community Fund, and five dollars a month is the maximum a family gets.

"How can a family live on \$1.25 a week?" I asked Mrs. Emil Solomon, executive secretary of Family Service.

"That is all we have," she said. "Before the depression started we had less than 4,000 people asking for every kind of aid. Today we have 16,000—just four times as many. All we wanted for actual food relief was \$52,000 and we couldn't get that. Business men simply did not have it."

It is a commentary upon the "saving-wage" paid oil-workers that the moment the depression was felt, the increase in charity applicants in Tulsa jumped 500 percent.

When I walked in to see Stith Ledbetter, the director of the Fresno, Cal., County Welfare Department, there was an old man standing at the shiny black counter littered with charity applications. The old man was a county farmer who had lost his twenty-acre farm for non-payment of taxes. He now lived on the outskirts of the city with his old wife.

They had had two sons, but two years ago when the father lost his land the boys took to the road. He had not heard from them since.

"Do you want to help me or not?" the old man was saying irritably. "All I want to know is whether you are going to pay the \$10 rent for us before they put us out."

"You'll have to fill out an application," Mr. Ledbetter said.

"But I filled one out two weeks ago. My wife filled one out two months ago. How many applications must we fill out?"

"We looked up your wife's application and it's been mislaid," the director said apologetically. "And we're unable to find the one you filled out."

"And we've been starving and the landlord's been threatening to throw us out while you can't find our applications," the old farmer protested in a high voice. "Do you think we

like to come here every day? It's bad enough to have to come once."

"We haven't been able to find your applications," Mr. Ledbetter kept repeating. "I know you filled them out but we can't find them."

"Can you find \$10 for our rent?" the old man asked desperately.

This conversation gives a clear idea of the state of charity in Fresno County. The Department of Welfare, the Community Chest, the Volunteers of America, the Salvation Army, the Catholic groups—all are befuddled. They not only lose applications, but none has any idea of how many are unemployed in the city or county or how many are hungry.

There are ten different organizations in the Community Chest alone and each group keeps its own records; some record only the money expended; others only the number of applicants or the number of food orders issued. Some organizations know how much they spent a year or two ago, still others have skeleton records for each month, records which tell very little. If you want the sums expended for a year, for two years, for five years, you have to sit down and take their records and total the figures yourself. It is simply incredible inefficiency, a condition which I found most in agricultural areas. In Fresno, not even budget estimates show the total number of people in want. The charities know only that if the applicant has been a state resident for three years and a county resident for one, the county will give him something to eat. Otherwise the hungry worker is shunted from charity group to charity group until he despairingly cries for food. Then someone gives him a little.

The history of Fresno County's charity is typical of the whole West Coast agricultural belt. Most of the charity increase came after 1931. Imported Mexican migratory workers who felt the pinch immediately were shunted about or deported, so destitution during the first two years of the

depression is not recorded except for the small number who were aided by religious groups like the Catholics. It was in 1931 that the native white American began to apply for charity, and today four out of every five receiving charity are native white Americans.

These tremendous increases in charity drained the cities and is at present a heavy drain upon the federal government; hence, the government has accepted the standard set by the Children's Bureau showing the minimum amount of food necessary to keep a grown man, woman, and children of varying ages alive. This standard is followed more and more throughout the country, and calls for an average allowance of about five dollars a week for a family of five. This sum does not include light, gas, water, heat, and clothing.

"The need of appealing for charity is scarring the lives of our people," said Philip Ketchum, director of the Community Chest in Omaha, which was one of the first cities to portion relief on this basis. "The psychological changes in our people as a result of this depression will probably be terrific; possibly its full effect will not be estimated until the next generation. I believe the effects are so great, though we may not see all of them now, that in the future it will mean as much to say that a man was unemployed between 1930 and 1935—and perhaps later—as to say that he had some disease which left permanent injuries upon his mind and body.

"Just what effect this living on charity will have upon the future generation is hard to say. The children of today, even in the high schools and colleges—countless millions of them—are growing up in an atmosphere of dependence, of tragically disintegrating homes, of inability to take care of themselves. Only the future can tell what the total effect of all these influences will be."



### III. A VETERAN LOOKS AT HIS CARDS

JOHN T. WENTZ was a patriot. When the Spanish-American war broke out, he joined the Army; when Wilson gave Mexico a taste of democracy, John T. Wentz was there, and when the World War broke out, though he was just over the age limit, he did what he could to save democracy.

When, under Republican Hoover, things got pretty bad, John Wentz blamed the "damned Republicans." He and his partner had managed to build a nice little business in New Orleans and were getting along comfortably when the 1929 crash came. By cutting here and there, he and his partner managed to keep their heads above water.

When Roosevelt was elected, John Wentz breathed a sigh of relief. The damned Republicans were out and the Democrats would now restore prosperity. When Roosevelt said the Blue Eagle would show the way, the partners hired extra help. Their overhead was increased and incoming sales did not justify the added payroll, but they did not want to fire the new employees, so the partners trimmed everybody's salaries, including their own, to decrease the overhead.

Still, business did not pick up; but Roosevelt was in Washington and if he did not succeed in one thing, he would try another. Sure enough, the alphabet came floating into the public ken: CCC, PWA, CWA—the whole long list of them. The newspapers were overjoyed. They said business was picking up, employment increasing. John Wentz did not find it so in his business. He saw small business men all about him go under and finally he had to let the NRA employees go, much as he hated to turn them loose in a land of increasing unemployment.

By this time, the partners' business was not bringing in enough to support both and John Wentz decided to let his partner try to keep the business going while he appealed to the government for work. The government which he had defended came to his rescue. It made him statistician for the Louisiana branch of the Department of Labor's National Re-employment Service. The government wanted to know just how many people were being put to work and the drift of labor from one type of work to another since the depression.

Today, John T. Wentz sits in New Orleans behind a desk loaded with reports from the sixty-three government relief offices in Louisiana. More than a score of clerks gather the reports, sift them, and give them to him; then he analyses them and sends the summaries to Washington.

He is getting on in years, is John T. Wentz. You can see that as he sits there, a heavy-set man, grim-jawed and sullen. The application cards that flow before him tell him what has happened not only in New Orleans but in the state; from the papers he sees that the rich are still rich, millionaires are still millionaires, and politicians are still getting graft. And the aging man is bewildered.

Take this card here. Tom Brown, a civil engineer who used to earn \$100 a week. He is applying for a job, any kind of job to keep from begging crusts of bread from charity. He has not had a job in two years. The money he had saved went long ago; the home he had was lost when the banks crashed. Today he is utterly destitute. There are lots of Tom Browns—engineers, school teachers, salesmen, former business men like himself.

The cards move swiftly under his fingers. Today these Tom Browns would be grateful if the government gave them \$9.40 a week to set rat traps in homes and stores and collect the rats the next day if any were caught.

There is John Smith's card. He is a Negro longshoreman,

one of the former 8,000 who used to work around the docks. There is little work for John Smith on the deserted wharves, maybe a day or two once a week or once in two weeks. He earns maybe \$5.60 and a family can't live on that, so John Smith is appealing to the government for the \$9.40-a-week job. There are thousands of John Smiths, destitute, starving, black and white.

Here is the card of a man who had owned his own home. He is one of the 10,000 who, out of the 30,000 in the city who had private homes, lost them. Many of these former home-owners are appealing to the government for jobs, but the government is firing men, not hiring them. The only place left for them is the charities.

So the cards flow under John T. Wentz's fingers, each recorded on a perfectly lined sheet with figures in the many columns, each little digit telling of some-one hungry, pleading for work—and there is no work.

And the millionaires are still millionaires and John T. Wentz shakes his head in bewilderment.

Here is Henry Jones, a plasterer, a good union man, too. The Department of Labor says Henry Jones' wages, since the depression, fell from \$1 an hour to 75 cents an hour. But Henry Jones says the best he can get is 40 cents an hour—when he can find occasional work. He is willing to use a pick and shovel, he is willing to get \$9.40 a week for himself and his family, but the government is firing men, not hiring them.

The cards slip smoothly through the statistician's fingers. Henry Jones, Henry Jones. Lots of them. Plasterers. Bricklayers. Painters. All good union men who would work at half the union scale if only they could find work. . . .

"There's something wrong in this country," John Wentz says. "Something wrong if the rich have all the money and these men and women are starving."

He fingered the carbon copy of a telegram lying on a batch of sheets. An angry sullen light was in his eyes.

"I'm head of the Spanish War veterans in this state," he said quietly. "I always keep this telegram I sent to Washington before me. Six war veterans committed suicide rather than starve when the government stopped their pensions. Not all of them were able to work—like myself. The pension was all they had."

He looked at the stacks of cards.

"War veterans. Lots of them," he said. "Begging for bread and those bastards who got rich off the war are still rich."

He paused and added:

"Patriotism, mister, don't pay a God-damn bit!"

"What good does it do to hate the government?"

"I don't hate the government. I hate all those God-damned politicians who are just working for the rich, not for the people. The government's feeding me. Sure. Since I've been here on this job, I've had my salary cut twice. Everybody has, but the government didn't stop the business men from raising prices on bread and milk and meat—some of them have doubled in price since the NRA started."

He talked from an overflowing heart.

"Sure. The government has home-loan banks, too, to help you save your home. Yeah! Try and get a loan from them and see what you get! I lost mine!

"I fought for my country. I paid my taxes. I lived an honest, decent life. But those rich bastards in New York never did a thing except take everybody's money away. Take Morgan. He can get away without paying an income tax. But I couldn't. He didn't shoulder a rifle and eat rotten food while waiting to get a bullet through his head. No, sir! Yet he's living off the fat of the land and we're starving."

"What'll you do if another war starts?"

"I'm too old to do anything, but I'll tell you what a lot of the boys are saying," he said grimly. "They're saying that if



those politicians want to start a war, let them start it, and they can do the fighting. We've learned our lesson. Get blown to hell and then sit on the sidewalk with a hat in your hand. Or stand outside a government office begging for a job so you can get something to eat!"

"Yeah? When the flag starts waving, you and the rest will shoulder guns all over again."

He thought it over carefully and then shook his head.

"I don't think so, mister. You haven't heard the veterans talk."

I pointed to the cards and the sheets with columns of figures.

"What do they tell?" I asked. "Things picking up?"

He shook his head.

"I don't see it from these figures. Looks to me like things are getting worse. Millions spent and only two and a half percent of the unemployed registered with the government agencies for work given jobs—many of them temporary."

"What's the average wage for those who do work?"

"I don't know. Anywhere from 30 cents an hour up. We have no records on that. I don't believe there are any. No one knows just how bad things are."

The government does not know some of the basic facts, the Association for Commerce does not know, what's left of organized labor officialdom does not know. No one seems to know or care. They give one the impression of just rushing around in dizzy circles.

"But what'll happen? I've been to the charities and they say they simply can't take care of the increased number of applicants."

"I don't know what we'll do except that there'll be hell to pay, that's all," he said quietly. "You can't throw millions of people out of work just like that—even if that work brings only a few dollars. If those politicians know what's good for them, they'd better do something quick."

"You mean the people will rebel, start a revolution?"

"No. No revolution. You can't organize these people and you have to have an organization for a revolution. But you'll have fights, riots, plenty of bloodshed. These people are going to eat—and so am I.

"I wouldn't join a revolution against the government but I'll sure take a rifle against those politicians in Washington and there's more like me."

And what John T. Wentz says is being said not only in New Orleans but throughout the South, more by the white-collar class than the utterly destitute unskilled black and white workers. Yet, among many workers and ruined business men throughout the country, there is still a note of admiration at the skill of the rich in "putting it over," as there was in the killer at the Swift and Company packing plant in South Omaha, when he exclaimed, "Smart people, this company!"

"How do you mean?"

"God damn! Papers say cows sell \$3 a hundred pounds. Used to sell \$10 a hundred. Wages cut because we got depression. Do just as much work with short hours as before and get less money. Papers say company sell more beef than ever before and only make half a cent profit. Son-om-mom-beetch, this company smart people!"

"What's smart about it?"

"God damn!" he laughed. "Look! Cows, they cheaper. Wages, they smaller. My wife, she buy meat and pay more this year than last year and company say make only half a cent profit a pound. God damn! That's smart people, eh?"

You get to the abattoir where the killer works through a labyrinth of corridors where broad-faced and broad-shouldered men in linen dusters walk about in a ghostly silence, their steps muffled by a thick layer of sawdust under their feet. Some of the dusters have splotches of blood on them and you know they have been in the abattoir where cows are

being slaughtered and dismembered at the rate of 500 an hour.

Everywhere men work swiftly, cutting, chopping, ripping out guts and hearts and lungs and livers. They stand up to their heels in blood. There is no expression on their faces. They are too intent. They must work fast, for a few seconds delay means falling out of step.

Once they used to kill and dismember 350 cows an hour, but since the NRA shortened the working day, Swift and Company just speeded up the work to make up for lost time. Now they do 500 an hour and they dare not fall behind lest some of those thousands and thousands out of work are given the jobs. They have no time to think or rest—not if they still want to work in this steaming room where the clothes stick to their bodies and blood gushes to the floor and winches creak and cows low their unforgettable cries of helpless terror. The killer is one of the 8,000 workers in the South Omaha packing plants, a Russian in a field dominated by the foreign-born workers.

A lowing cow sticks its head in the opening and the hammer cuts short its cry of fear.

"You like this?" I ask.

He looks a little puzzled and shrugs his shoulders.

"Oh, this is good job."

"You like to kill?"

"This is job," he says stolidly. "Somebody got to kill 'em. I got to work. Got family to support. Everybody do the same."

"How many hours do you work now?"

"Maybe thirty-two; maybe forty."

"How many did you work in 1929?"

"Seventy-two."

"Then the NRA has been good for you?"

"Good. Yes. NRA good. Less hours. But got to work faster. Got to kill more, quicker."

"How much did you make in 1929?"

"Make good wages. Maybe thirty-five dollars a week. Maybe forty."

"What do you make now?"

"Maybe seventeen; maybe nineteen dollars a week."

It was at this point that he laughed and commented admiringly upon the company being "smart people." The company had put something over. He could not understand how, with cows cheaper and wages cut about half and meat selling at a higher price than last year, the company earned only half a cent on a pound; but he had acquired enough of the American appreciation of putting something over to laugh at the statement and admire the packing house for getting away with it.

Not everyone was so fortunate as the killer. His brother had had no work for two years and long ago had moved his family into the killer's four-room flat. There were hundreds of families like that in Omaha who had "doubled up" to save on rent; yet he and his brother and so many others accepted everything with a stolid air. He was much like a peasant in war time. A machine, a vast machine, known as the government, starts grinding to take him off the land or out of the factory and send him to a faraway place to have his belly blown open, even as this cow's belly is opened, and he goes stolidly. It is war, and a machine has taken charge of him. He knows of nothing else to do but accept it. So it is when there is a depression.

"Couldn't you better your condition if you were organized?"

He shot a glance of suspicion at the men about him and shrugged his shoulders.

"No like to talk about union. Lots stool pigeons."

"Company stool pigeons or just workers who want to get in good with the boss?"

Again he shrugged his shoulders.



"Don't know. But plenty stool pigeons."

"Would you like to join a union?"

"Sure."

"Is the American Federation of Labor trying to organize here?"

"They try but everybody afraid. Lots join though."

"You join?"

He shook his head vigorously.

"No. Why I join? To get fired? I need job. I take care of my family. When strong union made I join."

In him, as in so many others, there is the tendency to let someone else take the initial risk. With jobs as scarce as they are, with charity lists doubling and trebling, he does not dare risk a move that might throw him out on the street.

"Do you like cuts in wages and the speed-up?"

"No. No like. But everywhere the same. Bad times."

The shrug that followed these words was filled with the fatalism of a class oppressed for centuries, a class always oppressed because it knows of nothing else but to accept what is given it.

"Maybe times get better," he says finally.

Besides the fear of getting fired, he does not want to join the A. F. of L. union. He had heard stories of walking delegates who take the workers' dues, do nothing for them, and when a strike comes, tell them to do what the boss says.

A man with a long sharp knife suddenly shook his left hand. He had cut himself and immediately he stopped work and left for the first-aid station.

"What happens if you get hurt?"

"Go to doctor or nurse."

"You get compensation?"

"Company take ten cents for insurance. If I get hurt, I get compensation. I get nothing from insurance. If I get hurt outside, I get insurance."

"Do you like this scheme?"

"Got nothing to say," he smiled good-naturedly. "Money taken from wages. If you get hurt working they say you want compensation or insurance and say who told you to cut like that so get hurt. They make trouble if you get hurt; if you get hurt bad maybe you get fired."

He laughed and shook his head again, this time with a slightly puzzled expression.

"They smart people. They give bonus, too, if make hundred per cent."

"What's that?"

"Don't know. Nobody know," he grinned broadly. "That's what foreman-boss wants. Hundred per cent. Work faster, faster all the time. I try sure make hundred per cent but when week ends, foreman-boss say only ninety per cent, so not get bonus."

"How much work do you have to do to make hundred per cent?"

"Don't know," he grinned shrewdly. "Nobody knows. Foreman-boss knows—maybe."

No one knows what "hundred per cent" means; all they know is that the company is whipping them up constantly to work faster, and fearful of losing their jobs, they dare not organize to oppose the killing speed-up. And yet, under it all, a hope is evident. Things may get better and the NRA may end, so they will not have to work so fast.

## IV. MORE UNEMPLOYMENT THAN EVER

WHATEVER the motives were back of the NRA measures, the results have been beneficial only to big business. This is pretty much admitted now even by the government. For the vast majority of workers and members of the middle class, the New Deal has been disastrous. Wages decreased while living costs increased. Countless thousands lost their homes due to inability to meet the mortgage and interest payments as a result of the decreased incomes which followed the NRA. Infinitely more thousands "doubled up" to save on rent.

The inability of the head of the family to earn enough for himself and his dependents resulted in an incalculable number of housewives who had never worked before swarming upon the labor market in desperate efforts to supplement the family income—if any. Since any person who wants a job and cannot find one is unemployed, this influx of female labor necessitates altering all calculations as to the number of unemployed. In every city which I visited, the unemployed who had been put to work through government work projects are fewer than the number of housewives now trying to get jobs.

Since I found this condition prevalent everywhere, I am forced to the conclusion that we have more unemployed today, even if we deduct the maximum 4,000,000 the government says it put to work, than we had before the NRA brought the wide-spread wage cuts.

Neither government spokesmen with their unemployment figures placed at 11,000,000 nor the Labor Research Association with its estimate of 17,000,000 has taken into con-

sideration this staggering number of women thrown on the labor market "because there is no way of accurately checking this number." To this enormous influx of female labor must be added the tremendous number of boys and girls who have grown to working age since the depression began—a number which is not balanced by those growing old and retiring.

Our unemployment figures are based on the number of workers who used to be employed in an industry and the number so employed today—which is a wholly inaccurate way of calculating the actual number out of work at the present time. They make no mention of the stagger system where those listed as employed actually work only part time, unable to earn enough to support themselves and their families. The number of those employed in some industries may increase numerically due to the stagger system but the total produced by the factory or mill or the total wages paid is no greater than if half of these workers were employed full time.

To estimate the total number of unemployed in the United States would be pure guess work. Neither the government nor the labor unions know. Neither is it possible to estimate with any degree of accuracy the total number of housewives who never worked before but who are now on the labor market or the total number of youngsters who have come of working age since the depression. We can, however, make a reasonable guess based on what I found in the cross-section of the country, that from 30,000,000 to 35,000,000 of our people are dependent upon charity. I come to this conclusion because in almost every area which I visited the number of those living on charity was approximately twenty-five per cent of the population. It rarely fell below this. And with a population of about 130,000,000 this would give us a minimum of 30,000,000 people whose lives depend upon the crusts given them by private or government charity.



Figures on unemployment make dull reading, but one can form a notion of its extent by a cursory glance at two or three average cities.

In Charlotte, N. C., population about 82,000; number of workers about 25,000; number unemployed, including those put to work by government, at least 12,000.

In New Orleans, population about 460,000; number of workers about 203,000; number of unemployed unknown, but almost every other person living on charity.

Fresno, Cal., population about 65,000; number of workers estimated by city officials at about 45,000; number of unemployed 12,000 registered for government relief with an equal number or more estimated as unemployed but not registered.

I give these figures as an illustration of a condition I found wherever I went, with variations, of course. Everywhere, almost the entire population capable of working was on the labor market. The number of persons registered with the government either for relief or relief jobs is not an accurate indication of the total number of unemployed, for millions still manage to earn something by occasional jobs or else live off friends and relatives.

A notion of the tremendous growth of destitution throughout the country can be had by a study of the growth of charity. In New Orleans, for instance, though only one out of every four persons gets a direct food allowance from the Community Chest, the number of those living on charity is raised to almost every other person when you add those getting relief from organizations not affiliated with the Chest, like Catholic groups and that vast army whose total probably never will be known: those getting aid from relatives and friends. In this city, charity and government officials estimate that three out of every four workers are unemployed or working part time, with most of those working full time scarcely earning a living wage.

In April, 1930, a few months after the crash, only three per cent of New Orleans' total population was out of work. Nine months later, January 1931, the percentage of unemployed had tripled. Since these percentages were recorded, no one has troubled to keep figures of the enormous increase in unemployment.

The first to feel the brunt of the depression were the unskilled workers, especially the Negroes. Relief figures, everywhere except in a few sections in the South, show that the Negro gets a larger percentage of relief than his population proportion. In New Orleans, for instance, the Negro, comprising only twenty-six per cent of the total population, gets sixty per cent of the total charity relief—which means that wherever possible, whites have taken what few jobs are available.

In Fresno, Cal., it is estimated that only some 6,000 adults, wives of business men and white-collar workers, are not on the labor market. The increase in unemployment in this city can be gauged when it is known that in 1928 there were approximately 500 persons who might have been classed as unemployed. This number was due chiefly to the seasonal nature of the work they did and was constantly fluctuating, so that though there was an average of 500 unemployed, they were not always the same persons. In 1934, the registered unemployed was more than 12,000—or twenty-four times what it was before the depression.

In Omaha no one knows how many are unemployed, though it is generally admitted that the depression did not affect the packing and railroad center as much as most cities because one of Omaha's chief industries is food, which people must have even if there are no jobs. Figures on the rise in charity applicants, however, show that in 1929 there were some 4,000, mostly due to the seasonal nature of some industries, and 18,000, excluding those on government relief jobs, in 1934. Philip Ketchum, director of the Community

Chest, could offer no estimate for 1935, though the demands for relief are increasing.

"It is almost impossible to foretell what the end of the year will bring or what conditions will be even a month or two ahead. Things are in too great a mess," he said.

The Chamber of Commerce there "guesses" that "about fifteen per cent of the workers are unemployed." Chambers of Commerce and business men, as well as government officials, I found, are always guessing. They do estimate, though, that every other person in Omaha is on the labor market.

On the iron range, as in Hibbing, Minn., unemployment is normally confined to the winter months when the Lake shipping season closes. In 1929, only the normal number of miners was affected by the seasonal closings, but by 1931, the iron-ore mines in this area shut down completely. In 1932, only one out of every four miners managed to get two months' work during the year. With the coming of the NRA, there was a perceptible pick-up beginning in July, 1933, but it was not sustained.

Here, too, though the towns are small and one could almost count noses, neither relief agencies nor village officials have any more idea of the number of unemployed than they have in the large cities. The size of a town does not seem to matter much in the national indifference to the number out of work. Officials "guessed" that in North and South Hibbing and the town of Stuntz there were about 2,500 heads of families out of work.

"Does this include everyone for the area you mention?"

"It includes flat unemployment," they said. "The man who works even five days a month is not included in this estimate because they are not officially included as such."

"How many work five days a month or work in part-time relief jobs?"

"We don't know."

Those working on farms or ranches were scarcely touched

by unemployment. The depression's chief effect in the cattle areas was in wage-scale reductions and the stretch-out. For example, one sheep-herder, and his dog, who can normally take care of 2,000 sheep is now forced to care for 4,000. In some areas, the increase in the number of cattle actually resulted in the hiring of more workers.

It is chiefly in the thickly populated industrial centers that I found unemployment at its worst. In Youngstown, O., one of the centers of the steel industry, I could find no one able to tell me how many steel-workers there were in the city, let alone how many were working full time, half time, how many on the stagger system, or what they earned. Public officials, union officials, and steel-company officials could only make "guesses" that the steel-workers comprised about half the working population, but no one seemed to know what the working population was.

Where a field is or has been unionized, one can get a notion of how many workers there are in that industry. With these figures one gets a fairly accurate idea of the extent of unemployment. In the Illinois coal fields, for instance, there were approximately 100,000 miners before the depression. Today, the maximum estimate of their number is around 90,000. The remainder left the coal fields, some going to industrial areas because they were blacklisted due to organizational activity and others because the standard of relief is higher in the industrial areas.

"Sure, we got \$5 a day," one miner told me. "But we don't work a whole week. Sometimes we work a few hours a day, sometimes a whole day. And those mines that are still operating have put in the stagger system so that we get a full three days' work out of every nine. Actually we work only one third of the time."

"But these mines are operating full time," I pointed out. "The papers say the mines have put more men to work and that things are picking up."



"Sure they put more men to work. But nobody makes a living. The operators say that they are trying to equalize the work. If there's work for 100 men, let's say, working full time, they put on 200 more men and give each one a third of the work. The union is in favor of that, though the union knows nobody can make a living working that way.

"What's really back of all this is that the union and the operators got together and the union told the operators to do that. The operators don't care whether they work a hundred men regularly or 300 men one-third of the time. The union wants it that way because it collects more dues."

In the anthracite region, the government's inaccuracy in computing the number of men at work in the mines is as clear as in other fields. The figures the government gathers show the number of days the mines are open. It does not necessarily follow that all the miners employed at these mines are working. Frequently only half the miners at a given mine work, so it is impossible to tell exactly how many are employed. Statisticians compute the number of miners who worked by totalling the number employed at the mines and the number of days the mines are open. They thus arrive at a wholly inaccurate total.

The white-collar worker in many areas has been affected more deeply even than the unorganized manual laborer. The white-collar worker, unorganized and alone, took the brunt of wage cuts and unemployment without even raising a voice in protest. The sudden drop from a position of comparative security to the dazed helplessness of unemployment and the necessity of pleading for the pitifully inadequate charity the hungry are given has brought about an appalling disintegration of morale and intellectual independence.

The manual worker, at least, had possibilities of organization and collective bargaining, but the stenographer, office clerk, business executive—those who always considered themselves above the laborer—were utterly lost; yet they are still

so individualistic that I found few who are interested in organizational moves. Starving, helpless, living on the same charity dole the ditch-digger gets, with wages reduced so that even when working his income does not equal that of the laborer, the white-collar man still clings to his air of aloofness, still considers himself better than the laborer. For a body of stenographers and office clerks to march on some relief station and demand adequate relief is unthinkable to them. They still think of themselves as a class superior to the worker on the street and they are paying the penalty in their back-hall-bedrooms and in their lonely homes.

The white-collar worker's job depends upon the number of other workers a business has. When there are many steel-workers there are many office-workers, and when there is no need for the steel-worker there is no need for the office-worker; and nowhere did I find the white-collar worker aware of his dependence upon the man in overalls.

This "genteel" class, rarely considered by the government, the city they work in, or the business which needs them, often has, as a class, more workers than the chief industry in the city where they work. Brockton, for instance, is known as a shoe center; the economic life of the whole city revolves around this industry. The city, the state, and the government keep tabs on the number of shoe-workers, their wages, and their living costs in comparison with their wages. Yet, as a class, there are more white-collar workers in Brockton than there are shoe-workers; there are more white-collar workers in New Orleans than dock-workers; there are more white-collar workers in Omaha than all the workers in the packing plants. But the white-collar worker, employed in many different offices, alone or in small groups, and almost never organized, is completely helpless against wage cuts. The average weekly wage of the office worker is as low as, or lower than, that of the unskilled worker. The only advantage the office worker has is in working 52 weeks in the year—if he

has a job—whereas the manual laborer is frequently out of work for long periods.

The disintegration of the white-collar class followed the same pattern as that of the other classes. Wage reductions forced an economy first perceptible in the living quarters. Many, loath to leave their respectable middle-class environment but unable to meet the rentals, "doubled up"; others, especially where entire families were white-collar workers, moved into the tenement districts in efforts to save on the rent; and as wage cuts were followed by unemployment, they were thrown on the charity lists.

In the higher income brackets of white-collar workers as represented by store managers, business executives, salesmen, engineers, technicians, and school teachers, the effects of the depression have been even more severe than on the ordinary office worker. The higher-class worker was "set for life," to use his own phrase. He never dreamed that a storm could arise which would destroy not only his earning-power but the very business he was engaged in; and feeling secure, he had bought a home, a car, luxuries. Now many of these homes are lost and the former owners depend on charity for their crust of bread.

The problem of adjusting this class of workers to available relief jobs is changing the labor trend in many areas. In New Orleans, clerks, stenographers, teachers, salesmen, minor business executives, etc., are being put to work at manual labor. There is apparent a change everywhere in the drift of employment. Men who once had nicely manicured fingernails now heave a pick and shovel. The government keeps no record of this changing aspect of labor.

"We have no records of what they did before the depression except on the application cards and we are not tabulating this kind of information," the government statistician in New Orleans told me. "What's the use of tabulating that? Does it make much difference whether a man was an engi-



neer and is now a shovelman, or a school teacher and is now wielding a pick?"

The school teacher is a problem distinct from the office worker because of his influence upon the community. The depression left its effects not only on those in his classes, but upon himself. The sight of hungry children in his class room coupled with the wage cuts he himself suffered is affecting his whole attitude towards our economic system. It is pretty hard for a teacher to look upon the pinched faces of his pupils and still tell them that this is the greatest, the richest, and the best country in the world. A changing attitude by the teacher towards those who control our economic system becomes a matter of great importance since the teacher has the moulding of the future generation in his hands.

A perception of what is happening expressed itself in Brockton. There, fear that the hunger and poverty seen in school children and the inability of the city, for a while, to pay its teachers "will sow the seeds of discontent in their [the teachers'] minds so that, consciously or unconsciously, it will be passed on to the children," was expressed by John F. Scully, superintendent of the city's schools.

The attitude of the community leaders towards teachers is much like that of a government which depends upon the army for its control. A discontented army is dangerous to a regime. Here, satisfaction with the present economic system depends greatly upon those who form the thought patterns of the coming generation.

"Whole families are dependent on their more fortunate fellows for support, and the specter of want has stalked boldly up and down the land," wrote the school superintendent. "The specter of disaster must be removed from the minds of teachers. There is grave danger that too deep a cut in salaries may sow seeds of discontent in their minds so that, consciously or unconsciously, it will be passed on to the children."

## V. "SOMETHING TO EAT"

MRS. KATE HARDY is a tired, worn woman in charge of Red Cross relief in Lincoln County, Miss.

"I just don't know what we'll do," she said excitedly when I called on her. "We have no more money, no more flour, no more clothes, and"—she bent forward and pointed secretly to a large packing box in a corner of the room—"this box is all that's left and there are hundreds coming in for relief. I don't tell them about this box because they'll just take it away. I'm saving it for the utmost emergency cases.

"All Red Cross supplies are gone. I haven't another sack of flour. We've had \$40,000 worth of supplies we got from the government which was portioned out by the national Red Cross as our share."

"Does the Red Cross here raise its own supplies?"

"Oh, my," she said wailingly, "we raise some money here but everybody's so poor. Last year all we were able to raise was \$1,000."

She reverted again to the box she was keeping secret.

"I'm keeping a few children's things in there so that they can go to school. So many of them stay away from school because they have no clothes, no shoes. It's terrible what a pass we've come to. The local chapter of the Red Cross has already supplied clothes to about 3,000 families, and especially their children—and that's most everybody.

"Besides the children's clothes, I've simply got to put away sheets and bedding in case some of these poor women become confined. They have no sheets or bedding in their homes, you know. They used to have, but since the depression seemed just never to end, things just wore out—sheets

and bedding and towels as well as clothes. Of course, if a family is well it can get along without sheets and blankets—well, they can somehow patch up the old blankets, you know. But in case of sickness, I've just simply got to have sacks of flour to make them a little bread when they're confined.

"And they're always getting confined, especially now that they haven't anything else to do!"

She laughed a little hysterically.

The very type of person applying for charity has changed. To the lowest class of manual laborer who, before the depression, became a charity ward when he lost his job, are now added vast numbers of the white-collar class and the small, formerly independent farmer in the agricultural areas. Men and women who had always been self-supporting, who had had private homes, money in the bank, and servants, are now living on charity.

When I walked into the Brookhaven, Miss., Federal Emergency Relief Office, which doles out food to share-croppers and former independent landowners, there were eight or ten farmers waiting inside. Two had their wives with them. There was only one Negro and he stood alone at one side of the room. All of them looked lost.

"The sums we give them," said Miss Agnes Shipp, who is in charge of relief distribution there, "depends upon the season of the year. Right now we have to give them enough for clothes. Most of them haven't a stitch of clothing. Clothes were worn out during the years of depression."

When you ask for records of how much the federal government actually spent on the farmer in this area and what class of farmers are applying, Miss Shipp smiles apologetically.

"I took charge about eight months ago. When I came here, the records were in a terrible mess. I couldn't tell you how many farmers were getting aid, but it was somewhere around 5,000 families."

"The entire population of the county is only about 6,000



families. Do you mean that five out of every six persons in this area are living off charity?”

“Well, pretty near the whole county is getting relief. The majority are really badly off, but there are a number of farmers who do not need charity, but get it just the same.”

“Why?”

“I don’t know. They get it. That’s all I know.”

“Distribution is in the hands of local officials. You mean that political juggling on the part of those running relief put a lot of people on the relief list who do not need it?”

Miss Shipp shrugged her shoulders. It was apparent that if she wished to hold her job she could not talk about political juggling. But from other sources, I gathered that politics is played here, as in other places, with the bread the hungry need. Politicians want to ingratiate themselves with the voting farmer and those who do not need relief receive from lavish hands the food supposed to go to the neediest. The poor lose out because they do not have a dollar or two to pay their poll tax and thus be a voting factor, a situation I found wherever failure to pay a poll tax takes away from the citizen his right to vote.

The majority getting food are share-croppers, with Negroes predominating. Only one out of every ten applicants for federal emergency relief is a former independent farmer. Before the depression, the farmer who had croppers on his land used to make allowances to them between March and August inclusive, which were deducted from the final settlement. Since the depression, the small landowner has himself scarcely been able to scrape together enough to live on. When the FERA asks the landowner why he no longer makes advances, since he borrows money from the government against his crop, the farmer invariably replies that he cannot.

The Negro gets some measure of relief, but most applicants are white, in much greater proportion than their population ratio. The actual figures since the depression—even

for last year—are not available “because there is no system.” Everything is disorganized. “Relief expenditures, though, have increased tremendously,” to quote Miss Shipp.

When I left Miss Shipp, the number of share-croppers in the bare office had increased. They stood about, still with that lost air, yet with a hardness in their eyes. Their unshaved, red faces were hard and their lips were thin lines. They did not speak—just stood about waiting for something to eat.

In other areas throughout the country, the inadequate relief has resulted in mass demonstrations and protests, almost invariably under Communist leadership. In such areas, where those in control of the community did not realize the desperation of the hungry and tried to disperse the crowds, riots sometimes resulted; but usually, merely the massed demands were sufficient to gain them some concessions. In Springfield, Ill., in the heart of the soft-coal fields, I witnessed a typical protest meeting and saw how the state handles this problem and what results it had upon the state's chief line of defense: its police system.

The unemployed miners sat on the sunny steps of the Sangamon County Courthouse. An hour before the meeting was scheduled to start about fifty had already appeared. It was better to hang around the courthouse than to sit at home and look at the pinched faces of your wife and children and know that there was not even a slice of pork left in the house and that Mrs. Nannie Fain—she was in charge of the city relief—simply wouldn't give them enough to eat.

It was Mrs. Fain that these men talked about in low voices and wondering shakes of their heads.

“My wife come down here last week,” said one young miner, his pale gray eyes staring at a tree's shadow flung across the walk, “and when she came home and told me what this woman said I near come down here and killed her.”



The other miners in the group nodded. They had heard of Mrs. Fain's doings before.

"What did she tell your wife?" I asked.

He looked at me steadily for a moment.

"Told her she was a good-looking kid and for her to go hustling." There was a suppressed fury in his quiet voice as he said it. I looked at him incredulously.

"The woman in charge of relief here told her that?"

"And it wasn't the first time," a miner with a worn, lined face interrupted. There were blue powder marks over his right eye. "She told it to my daughter, too—here two weeks ago. We was gettin' \$3.50 a week for relief for our whole family. That's me and my wife and two kids, Helen's nineteen and hasn't had a job since she got out of school near three years ago. And this Mrs. Fain looks Helen over and says, 'You don't need no relief. A girl with a face and legs like yours could support the whole family herself. There's plenty girls making a living on the streets, and getting nice clothes, too.'"

"My girl started to cry, and her mother——"

He shook his head dejectedly.

"What did your wife do?"

He shrugged his shoulders. "What could she do! She felt like killin' her but she couldn't do nothin'. If she opened her mouth she'd get no relief at all and the kids got to eat."

Two motorcycle police drove up to the corner of the courthouse lawn, set in the heart of the town's business streets, and parked their motorcycles. At the far end of the courthouse square, two more motorcycle police arrived. A few minutes later they were joined by more police on motorcycles and on foot, broad-shouldered men in uniforms with tight sets to their mouths. The courthouse was being surrounded by police.

"What sort of a meeting is this?"

"It ain't no meeting. It's a demonstration."

"Who called it?"

"Communists." He looked at me as he said this word. There was almost an aggressive air about him.

"Oh, Communists."

"Yeah, Communists." The voice had grown a little harder.

"Aren't they always causing trouble?"

"Maybe. I don't know. But they're the only ones who are trying to organize the unemployed around here to get a decent food supply and to get this woman out of her job."

"What have they got those cops there for?"

They looked at me almost pityingly.

"They always have cops when Communists call a demonstration."

"But why?" I persisted.

"I guess maybe in case we get tired of just askin' an' start takin'. I don't know why they got cops. But they always do."

More miners in blue overalls, most of them tall, rangy men from the coal fields, kept drifting onto the lawn. Some sat on the steps, others on benches on the grass. Many came from the rear of the courthouse where, facing the lawn, the Progressive Miners Union had its headquarters. There must have been some two hundred coal-diggers and a scattering of women in the crowd when the doors back of us opened and a stream of men issued, each wearing a white handkerchief tied around his left arm. All had belts under their civilian coats, broad, khaki-colored belts with brown holsters attached to them and ugly black butts of pistols sticking out of the holsters. Some of the deputies were coal-diggers, too, judging by the powder marks on their faces and hands. A few scattered over the lawn but most of them stood on the steps leading to Sheriff Allan Cole's office.

"Who are they?" I asked.

"Deputies. Forty of them," a miner said grimly. "And twenty cops."

"What do they expect—a revolution?" I laughed.

They shook their heads.

“They always get deputies and cops and guns when the Communists have a demonstration.”

On the main street of the town, facing the courthouse steps, well-dressed men and women stopped in front of the windows with their bright displays to stare curiously at the police and deputies.

Suddenly a trim little figure with gray hair and rimless glasses popped from behind the doors and looked over the scattered men and women on the lawn. He was pale and his sixty-five years had left their lines on his slight, nervous hands which he moved constantly. Then he vanished behind the deputies as suddenly as he had appeared.

“That’s Sheriff Cole,” said one of the miners. “He said there ain’t going to be no demonstration here today.”

“I don’t know why they got all these cops here now,” said another miner. “The meetin’ ain’t scheduled to start for almost forty minutes.”

“Maybe they think we’ll fool ’em and start earlier,” one miner laughed.

“What’s the meeting for?” I asked.

“We want something to eat,” a miner said simply. “And we don’t want a woman telling our wives and daughters to go on the street hustling if they want anything to eat.”

More men in overalls and threadbare suits drifted onto the lawn. A woman pushing a baby carriage approached and I could see two motorcycle policemen stop her, apparently trying to dissuade her from going in. She spoke sharply to them and they turned away.

A small group of marchers approached, carrying banners demanding the removal of Mrs. Fain and denouncing as forced labor the work they have to perform at far less than normal pay in return for the relief allowances granted them. The police let them march onto the lawn and then closed in.

Heads poked out of the courthouse’s upper-story windows

and half a dozen pale-faced deputies joined those standing on the steps before the door. The deputies were obviously scared. The coal-diggers moved slowly towards the courthouse steps, looking at the tall, strapping Amazon leading the marchers.

"That's Ann Morton," a miner said to me. "Coal-miner's daughter."

There was a note of pride in his voice as he watched the twenty-three-year-old girl. The pale-faced deputies moved together to form a line blocking her entrance to the courthouse.

The nattily dressed old man with the gray hair and rimless glasses popped out again, this time so nervous and excited that his hands trembled as he waved them excitedly in the air.

"Fellow citizens!" he pleaded in a high, quivering voice. "There's no meeting today. I'm asking you citizens to return to your homes."

The coal-miner's husky daughter took the steps two at a time with the crowd surging behind her. There was a muttering among the blue-denimed men. Their faces were grim, determined. The girl towered head and shoulders above the sheriff.

"You told us we could have a demonstration whenever we wanted it," she said, loudly.

"You have no permit," he returned excitedly.

"We tried for a week to get one but you avoided us."

The sheriff ignored her and turned to the crowd. "Citizens, there'll be no meeting——"

Ann Morton raised her arms and addressed the crowd:

"Fellow workers, the sheriff says there'll be no meeting today. What do *you* say?"

"Put her under arrest!" the sheriff shouted excitedly.

Two deputies seized her by the arms. A miner standing nearby struck a deputy in the eye.



“Get your God-damned hands off her!” he growled furiously.

Another deputy pulled a gun and stuck it in the miner’s ribs.

Others drew their pistols. The crowd fell back.

The girl was pushed through the doors into the courthouse lobby while deputies with hands on their pistols stood guard. The police in uniform swarmed onto the courthouse steps and began dispersing the demonstrators.

“It’s all over,” they kept saying pleasantly. “Now everybody go home. Keep moving.”

The miners moved, only to congregate again in small groups and talk in low voices. Several white-faced women talked excitedly among themselves.

“They’re going to take her to jail,” one said. “They’ll get her out the back door.”

Miners and their wives moved to the rear of the courthouse but the sheriff and his deputies kept the girl in his office for more than a half-hour while the crowd was dispersed. Then two deputies, still holding the girl by the arm, marched her through the rear entrance to the jail.

“Why don’t we stop them from taking her to jail?” one woman demanded.

“Yeah, why not? You got no organization. If you try it alone you’ll get shot or go to jail too.”

“We oughtn’t to let ’em get away with that. All she was trying to do was get us miners something to eat—us and our children.”

The groups stood about, doing nothing—leaderless.

That night a protest meeting was called in a hall two blocks from the courthouse. There had been little time for announcements of the meeting but even then some two hundred miners, wives, and daughters appeared.

Several speakers explained why Ann Morton was in jail for trying to get them something to eat. The audience shifted restlessly. A red-faced miner got up, his eyes blazing.



"I'm tellin' you that they'll keep puttin' Miss Morton and the rest of us in jail if we let 'em. I tell you that we got to be better organized. If we call another meetin' and they arrest one of our speakers then we got to take our speaker away from them. And the only way we can do it is by organizing."

"The next time they hit Ann Morton we ought to be ready to hit 'em back," a tall miner said softly.

A young boy with a pale face rose from a bench in the rear of the hall.

"Ma'am, can I say somethin'?"

"Come right up," the woman speaker invited.

The boy walked to the little table and turned to the audience.

"I know him," a miner shouted, "that's Blondy Ryan. He was a deputy sheriff this afternoon."

A threatening murmur swept through the room.

"That's right," the boy said quietly. "I was a deputy sheriff and I've come up to apologize for being a deputy. I didn't know what it was all about. I ain't had a job since the CWA stopped and I was told I could get four dollars by being a deputy at a Communist riot, so I went and was sworn in. But I didn't know that Miss Morton—that all she was trying to do was to get us people something more to eat. No, sir, I didn't know that, so I come up to apologize."

He paused embarrassedly while the audience burst into a storm of hand-clapping and cheers.

"Atta boy, Blondy!" the miner who had denounced him shouted.

The boy stood there twirling his hat in his hands.

"I just want to say one thing more," he added. "I ain't got no more to eat than you folks but I'll go hungry before I spend them four dollars for myself. Ma'am," he turned to the speaker, "would you mind if I gave them four dollars to your unemployed organization? I'd sure feel a lot better if you'd let me."

## VI. I SEE BY THE PAPERS . . .

THE newspapers have been, and still are full of reports, statements, charts and graphs that we are getting out of the depression. In the early days of the NRA there used to be similar "evidence" of the benefits resulting from that experiment which even its staunchest supporters now admit failed to accomplish what it had been hoped it would accomplish. In the early months of the NRA the reports about its wonders were given prominence in the news columns and on the air, as the reports today of how we are getting out of the depression are being given prominence. Actually the NRA, then and now, has benefited only big business. So far as the average worker is concerned it has lowered his standard of living, raised prices for essential commodities, and instituted the killing speed-up system. The benefits supposedly produced by the NRA in the days when it was accepted with joyously outspread arms by American business men were directly traceable to government relief money and installment-plan buying of pleasant but not essential luxury commodities like refrigerators and radios.

The national optimism aroused by this increase, which varies from ten to thirty per cent, appears to me far greater than is justified when we consider just what sort of increase it is and what it means to the people.

The country saw a fifteen per cent increase in the shoe industry over last year's business, but in Brockton, which manufactures expensive shoes, the increase was only three per cent. The national increase came from the cheaper-priced shoes. But, when manufacturing increases, it does not follow that consumption increases. Though the business in-

dices flaunt this rise, the retail sale of shoes, even at cheap prices, dropped.

Brockton, in order to survive, had to compete with other shoe manufacturers and put out a cheaper shoe. The manufacturer protested to the union that he could not pay the same wages to make a three-dollar pair of shoes that he could for a ten-dollar pair, so wages were reduced. There was not enough business to keep all shoe-workers busy, so the stagger system was introduced; that is, the available work was divided among the employees. This, of course, reduced the earning power of those who worked. The business record showed that the factory operated full time and that the payroll was normal. On the wage scale recorded by the government, the workers could manage to live, but what the worker actually got was half a week's work and half a week's pay. So the picture we have is not only wage reductions but a stagger system which so reduces the earning power of the workers that they cannot earn enough to live on. Many are forced to appeal to charity while in thousands of other cases married, middle-aged women who have never worked before, go out offering the labor of their hands in despairing efforts to keep their families from disintegrating.

So great was this influx of women on the already crowded labor market, that the Chamber of Commerce advised manufacturers to come to Brockton where, it advertised:

"Labor is cheap."

"Skilled labor is abundant."

"Female labor is plentiful."

"Wages," the Chamber stated, "compare favorably, in some instances are lower, than those of the average Massachusetts industrial community."

"The labor situation, as it relates to the shoe industry and allied trades, is the best it has been for 25 years. Labor has amicably accepted wage reductions which now make pos-

sible the manufacture of any grade shoe at competitive price lists."

The shoe center is so dazed that no one troubles to gather figures of average weekly earnings. Even the Brotherhood of Shoe and Allied Craftsmen has no idea of the average wage.

"During the busy season," John Murphy, president of the Brotherhood, said, "skilled labor can earn \$35 a week and the unskilled some \$10 less—if they work a full week; but they seldom work a full week when you consider the slack period, the stagger system, and other factors. The shoeworker is lucky if he averages \$15 a week during the busy season."

Even the Chamber of Commerce admitted that workers are not earning a living wage. "On paper they are," the secretary told me, "but not in the pay envelope. Let us say the worker is supposed to get \$18 a week. If he divides his time with another worker, naturally he gets only half of that."

This is what the business increase in the shoe industry meant to the workers in Brockton. In Charlotte, N. C., fairly representative of the Southern textile area, we have another illustration of what the business increase meant for the people.

A year ago, three out of every four mills in this area were closed. When I was there, all were working day and night in the two shifts permitted. The workers feel that conditions have improved "quite a little" but when you probe into the phrase, they explain that what they mean is "We get a little more to eat, but that's about all."

The increase in pay and the shortening of the working hours for the mill-worker was offset by the increase in prices he had to pay for everything and by the speed-up. The business increase in the textile industry resulted in profits for the mills, exhaustion for the workers, and higher prices



for cotton goods which the American worker has to pay everywhere.

In New Orleans, one of the country's largest cities, the business increase was chiefly in the retail stores. The number of unemployed put to work was so small in comparison with the total number of unemployed that the money poured into the area by the government was more than offset by the general reduction in wages. Hence, in this area, due to the rise in living costs simultaneously with wage cuts, the workers are much worse off since the business increase.

In the oil fields, retail business improved for a few months but is now back to a little above the level of the depression period.

W. A. Raison, in charge of the Retail Merchants' Association in Tulsa, said that most of the gain was attributable to holiday buying.

"How much have wholesale prices increased?" I asked him.

"I don't know. We haven't any details—but they increased, some a little and some a good deal."

"How much have retail prices increased here?"

"I don't know that either. I imagine they've jumped in the same proportion."

With the oil companies, the same vagueness exists as to the actual percentage of the much hailed increase in business. After reading the local papers about glowing increases in the city I was in and then asking for facts, figures, and percentages, I found in every instance—not almost every instance, but *every* instance—that the very people talking of business increases had little to base their opinion on except vague guesses.

The fruit and vegetable growers on the West Coast had some improvement in business. The San Joaquin Valley is fairly typical of this agricultural area insofar as the business increase is concerned, and I asked G. F. Thomas, Secretary



of the Fresno, Cal., Chamber of Commerce, about business conditions in his area.

"The trouble has been too much production," he said. "You know how it is. A farmer gets a good price for his grapes so his next-door neighbor starts growing them, too. Prices were too high so it brought on overproduction which in turn brought prices down so they were insufficient to maintain the farm."

"How many have lost their land since the depression?"

"Lots of them. I haven't the slightest idea of how many. Only the banks could tell."

"How many farmers have mortgages on their property?"

"Damned near every one," he laughed.

"Wouldn't the farmer prevent strikes and avoid the danger of losing his crop if he paid migratory workers more?"

"The farmer would like to pay more but he feels that with prices up the way they jumped after the NRA, he can't afford it. The farmer is a worried man. For years he just barely held on to his land; his place is heavily mortgaged. Now that things are picking up and he sees a chance to make a few dollars these reds come along, organize the workers and demand higher wages. If the crop isn't picked right away the farmer loses his whole year's work, perhaps his home. That's why the farmers got out their shotguns and threatened to shoot every red agitator who came into the country."

Those farmers who still had their land after the past five gruelling years saw a little light in the darkness and they grew desperate when the migratory worker asked for a share in the business increase in the form of a little better wages. What 100,000 migratory workers in this area got out of the business improvement was threats of jails and bullets.

Sometimes I wonder just how much business increase the country really experienced. There were very few Chambers of Commerce or Retail Merchant's Associations which, when

pressed for actual figures of the claimed increase, could supply them. Most of them merely hazarded guesses.

In Longview, Wash., for instance, I wandered into the pleasant offices of the Chamber of Commerce for information about the "planned city" originally started by the founder of the great Long-Bell Lumber Co. The Secretary of the Chamber was out, but Miss Katheline Petersen, the assistant, was in.

"Has business increased or decreased?" I asked.

"It must have increased," she said, after studying a long list of figures which the Chamber had been accumulating, "because in 1928 we had 521 retail stores of all kinds and in 1934 in the middle of the depression there were 550."

"But the town has grown by the addition of other industries which moved here since the depression. Couldn't that account for the increase in stores?"

"I suppose so," she said.

"Well, did any retail stores fail since 1929?"

"Oh, yes. I don't know how many but there were numerous stores that failed."

"How about the earning capacity of the workers; has that increased or decreased?"

"It's increased," she thought.

"Everybody working in the lumber and other industries around here?"

"Yes, except those who went back to the farms."

"What proportion of the population returned to the land?"

"Oh, I should say about half."

"Would you call that a sign that business was increasing?"

"Oh," she said, "I thought you meant whether the lumber companies were doing more business."

The lumber companies did do better business since the NRA. Many of them wrote off the losses of the depression

years, but the workers got the same "benefits" they got everywhere: wage reductions, speed-up, and rises in the cost of living.

In the cattle region, the madness of our economic system got the ranchers into a ruinous mess. When the price of cattle advanced in the hey-day long before the crash, each rancher saw visions of wealth and started expanding. The expansion continued until there were so many cattle that prices tumbled. In 1929, Wyoming, for instance, had 771,000 head; now, in 1935, there are over a million head. With prices at their present level it means bankruptcy to sell, so they cling to their ever-increasing stock which is eating them out of their land, the while millions go hungry because there are too many cows.

Neither the government nor anyone else seems to know how many ranchers lost their land and cattle. Those closest to the ranchers and banking interests estimate that about one out of every five who lost his land is now working on a salary basis for the bank which foreclosed on him.

So, in the cattle areas, business is actually worse than it ever was.

The cry of the small business man and the worker that the NRA has hurt instead of helped him is more than justified. Since this is not a book of statistics, I shall not go into great detail with figures and percentages. I shall offer only enough to show that under the guise of helping the worker and the small business man, the results achieved were actually the ruin of many business men, reduction in earnings for those who still had jobs, and the making of enormous profits for big business.

The Federal Reserve Bank of New York compiled figures on the profits of nearly 300 companies. These companies show an enormous increase during the period when more and more workers were having their wages reduced, their

relief dole cut, and while charity applicants enormously increased. The profits are:

|            |               |
|------------|---------------|
| 1932 ..... | \$100,000,000 |
| 1933 ..... | 202,800,000   |
| 1934 ..... | 430,500,000   |

In other industries where wage cuts and the speed-up have produced widespread discontent, similar enormous profits are shown; for instance, automobiles:

|            |                           |
|------------|---------------------------|
| 1932 ..... | a deficit of \$18,700,000 |
| 1933 ..... | a profit of 82,500,000    |
| 1934 ..... | a profit of 86,600,000    |

According to the National Industrial Conference Board, an employers' research agency, the cost of living is now 14% higher than at the beginning of the New Deal.

Retail food prices, as of February 15, 1935, are about 35% higher than at the beginning of the New Deal.

According to the U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the purchasing power of the average Southern cotton-textile worker was "at least 25% less" in August 1934 than in August 1933.

I do not offer these as unusual figures. They represent the trend in this country of enormous profits for big business while the worker's earning power and standard of living are constantly being hammered down.



## VII. THE GOVERNMENT HELPS THE PEOPLE

THE cotton mills in Charlotte, N. C., are on the outskirts of the city. They are solidly built red-brick buildings, long and spacious. Within the mill, there is a constant roar from the endlessly turning belts. The air is slightly dusty and little white flecks flutter in the sunlight, struggling through the closed windows. The panes are dusty, covered with a thin, hazy film, like soiled snow. The floor is splotched with oil and flakes of cotton. The women walk back and forth before the frames, moving rapidly from one side to the other.

At one end of the room in one of the mills I visited, a bright-eyed youngster, solemnly intent upon her work, tended a long frame. She was too busy to stop and I walked alongside.

"How're things?" I asked. I had to speak loudly because of the roar of the machines.

"All right," she said, swiftly. Her eyes followed the turning spindles.

"Better since the NRA?"

"Yeah."

"How much do you make?"

"Twelve-fifty."

"How many hours?"

"Eight. We used to work twelve."

"Less hours and more pay, eh? NRA do that?"

"Yeah. But we got doubled-up."

"What's that?"

"Doubled-up. Stretched-out. We got to do twice as much



work as we used to. Got to work faster, too. So it's all the same as before. We get exactly what we got before."

"How much was that?"

"Six dollars a week. Now we work twice as much so we get twelve dollars. No difference."

"But you have four hours extra a day, haven't you?"

"Yeah. But what good's that? I'm too tired to go out when I get through."

Everywhere, throughout the country, I heard the same cry from the workers: the speed-up, the killing speed-up which is exhausting their bodies, sending them home sodden and spent, with just enough energy to eat and rest for the next day's grind.

Despite what the "New Deal" has really done to the workers, so great is the popularity of President Roosevelt, so great is the faith of the worker in his promises, that in the face of wage cuts and the government's successful efforts to settle strikes in favor of the employer while telling the workers what marvelous gains they have made, most of our people still believe that these conditions are only temporary and that before long things will get better for them.

In Brockton, "the shoe center of the world," most shoe-workers walk about so bludgeoned by the years of depression, unemployment, and wage reductions, that they are completely dazed. Most of them place their hopes in union leaders, even as manufacturers now place theirs in Roosevelt. For years, the workers there were accustomed to union control of labor and though they still have that, there is a smouldering resentment directed particularly against the NRA.

The hullabaloo which preceded the NRA roused a hope that things would improve. Workers thought wages would go up; now they find that wages dropped while prices rose, and the resentment is all the greater because of the disappointment of their hopes.

According to John Murphy, president of the Brotherhood of Shoe and Allied Craftsmen, the independent union controlling labor in the shoe industry here, there are many factories which are not paying even the minimum wage required by the code.

"One factory," he told me, "made workers sign cards before they were paid. The cards gave the number of hours the workers were supposed to have put in. According to these hours, the minimum wage was being paid, but actually the workers put in more hours than they signed for. We have skilled workers who are not getting the minimum wage. We complained to the State Compliance Board in Boston, but they never did a thing about it."

The decrease in hours established by the code, so far as the shoe industry is concerned, does not mean anything, for most operations are on piece work. In the factories which are busy, a speed-up system is employed to make up for the lost hours, and on those operations which are paid for on an hourly basis, the factories follow a policy of replacing older workers with younger and faster ones so as to get more work in the allotted time. In other businesses, especially in stores and restaurants, those who earned more than the minimum had their wages reduced or, in countless instances, were fired and others rehired at the minimum wage. Such procedures I found very common everywhere.

Complaints to local compliance boards are frequently ignored. Code enforcement is handled by local officials—either business men or politicians—and the relations between them are all too clear. In these relations I found a distinct class alliance between employers and the boards. There is a labor representative in Charlotte, as there is almost everywhere on these compliance boards, and even if he wanted to do something he is usually helpless because business controls the largest number of votes.

In the textile center, labor's representative on the board

is Albert Jackson, an A. F. of L. man. He told me blandly about the "stretch-out" system in the mills.

"What are you doing about it?" I asked. "Isn't the stretch-out keeping a lot of workers from getting jobs?"

"Sure, but there ain't much that can be done," he said.

In the home of a bricklayer whom I visited in Charlotte, I found eight men. Two were non-union mill workers, four were members of locals affiliated with the Central Labor Union, and the other two were unskilled laborers whose lives had been spent working at odd jobs whenever they found them. They were a fairly representative group of this city's workers, except that there was a greater proportion of union men in this home than there is in the city.

All but one, a mill worker, were living on charity. From the mill workers I gathered that in most mills the custom of paying the weekly wage in scrip has been abolished since the NRA. Only a few mills still operate company stores, for the advent of the \$12 minimum wage enabled the worker to buy at other stores but, unable to overcharge at the commissary and still seeking ways to get as much as possible of the raised wages back from their employees, many mills raised the rent on their shacks from four dollars a month for a four-room house to eight dollars "because wages were doubled."

In the Southern farming belt, I found that the government's "help" has driven the small farmer and share-cropper into the starvation ranks. There the AAA is hated instead of merely resented. Lincoln County, Miss., a typical small-farm cotton area, is an excellent illustration of what happened in the deep South.

One out of every five farms is worked on a cropper basis; that is, the landowner advances (or rather, used to advance before the depression) sufficient for the cropper and his family to exist on from the plowing season in February and March, until August, when the crop is baled. The other



farms are worked by the farmer and his family. Most of the landowners are white. There are fewer than 100 farms out of the 2,500 in the county which are owned by Negroes, though the Negro comprises 35 per cent of the total population. Of the privately owned farms, one out of every five has been sold for non-payment of taxes. Charles R. Ashford, the government's Lincoln County farm agent who contracts with the farmer for restricted plowing, deals only with those who still own the land. The government sees no sense in dealing with a cropper or "half-hand or half-tenant" as he is termed, though croppers comprise half the population. Not only does half the population get no benefit whatever from government aid, but they are actually worse off than before, for now a landowner, because his plowing is restricted, does not need so much work done. The only thing left for most of the croppers was charity and before the government got around to giving them some pork and flour, both landowners and cropper had grown desperate.

"Before federal relief," said Ashford, "the farmer who was unable to pay taxes just threw up his hands and quit. He could not get money or credit. One of our two banks failed because it could not collect on outstanding loans, and one bank simply cannot advance money to a whole county. The farmers held tax-payers' meetings. They cursed the local, state and national government pretty vehemently and when that did not help, started talking of doing something drastic. There was a time here when we couldn't tell what they might do."

But, though the spirit of the farmer who got a government contract is "much better" there is nevertheless a strong suspicion even in him that he is not really getting the advantages he thought he was. The production credit association, formed to help the farmer, he has concluded, is actually helping only the big landowners and corporation-owned plantations in the Delta country.

"That there government credit association is supposed to help us, but all it's doing is making it impossible for us to get any help," a number of farmers told me.

Most small farmers in this area need anywhere from \$50 to \$100 to help them through the season. The usual loan requested is around \$50 for a twenty-acre farm.

The production credit association requires that for every \$100 or fraction thereof which a farmer borrows, he must buy a \$5 share in the association. To this is added 6 per cent interest, or three dollars more. Then there is a charge of \$1.50 for recording the mortgage and \$2 for an inspection fee. When the small farmer totals this up, he finds that for the \$50 he needs, he is charged \$11.50 for the "help" the government offers him.

In the heart of the Oklahoma oil area, the NRA has been a "complete flop," in the words of C. A. Border, secretary of the Tulsa Chamber of Commerce.

"The re-employment agreements are rather thoroughly discredited," he told me. "You know it and I know it. I was a member of the local compliance board and I ought to know. The NRA didn't accomplish a great deal. It put very few extra people to work, but brought in its wake a general decrease in wages. There are some who think the NRA helped but I don't see that it helped a damn bit. The only help I can see came from the CWA."

"How many workers were discharged and others rehired at the minimum wage rates?"

"I don't know. We tried to find out but couldn't. The government made a study of that through the post office. I think they did it all over the country. We never saw the results and the government never published a word about it."

"What's been the general effect of the NRA on wages and employment?"

"The tendency has been to reduce wages, especially the white-collar class out here. "Why"—he turned to his secre-



tary and asked—"what can you get a stenographer for now?"

"Twenty cents an hour."

"Let's see," I said. "Twenty cents an hour. Forty-hour week. That's eight dollars a week?"

"That's right, and men who spent years training in universities—like geologists and engineers—can be bought cheaper than stenographers. They were all thrown out of work. Oil companies didn't need them during the last five years, what with more oil than they knew what to do with."

"How about living conditions here?"

"They've improved a bit during the last year but they're still way below what they were in 1929."

In this "wealthiest city per capita in the world," it was the same story that I heard everywhere; wages decreasing, prices rising, unemployment increasing, homes broken up; families disintegrating, insufficient charity trying to keep them alive.

The worker now usually gets the minimum wage specified by the oil code. The reduced working hours, to those out in the field, means nothing. Due to the nature of the work, men frequently have to go some distance from their homes, sometimes as many as one hundred miles one way and another hundred back. The worker gets nothing for the time lost in traveling. After getting on the job, he has to work eight hours. I met several oil workers who rise at five in the morning and do not get home until seven or eight in the evening.

Complaints against the oil companies for violations of the code bring no results. The A. F. of L. keeps telling its members that the compliance board will act on them. In the sparsely settled areas, the boards seldom function; workers cannot reach them, and added to this is the fear lest their signed complaints—and they must be signed—result in loss of jobs.

In Tulsa, the compliance board is "acceptable to labor" according to A. F. of L. officials, but it is far from being acceptable to the workers with whom I talked. The compliance board, despite two "labor representatives," is a puppet in the hands of the oil companies. It has accomplished practically nothing for the workers.

Since the oil code was signed there have been three different compliance boards. The first was composed entirely of corporation lawyers and was openly a company board. Their indifference to complaints aroused a wave of resentment, and a new board was chosen, this time packed by Chamber of Commerce shining lights. They, too, proved indifferent and the protests became so loud and insistent that A. F. of L. control over the men was threatened. The second board was thereupon discarded and a third picked with two A. F. of L. officials "to represent labor." But labor is still protesting bitterly.

On the West Coast, the migratory workers' conditions are worse even than those of the share-croppers in the deep South. In the great Northwest lumber region, the paper income of the lumberman has increased, but the actual contents of the pay envelope has decreased. This is due chiefly to the reduction in working hours. During the code negotiations, the lumber companies held out for a forty-hour week, though their employees seldom worked this long. On a forty-hour basis, they could just about earn a living at the minimum wage. If the number of hours permitted by the code had been thirty, the wage scale would have had to be increased, so what the NRA achieved for these workers was a lower wage scale on the forty-hour basis, while companies work their men about thirty—that is, if the men work a whole week.

In the cattle ranges, where the rancher is more of a small industrialist with the psychology of a small factory owner, the NRA drove the cattleman deeper into the depths of

despair, but considerably helped the sheep-grower by juggling the price of wool. The tremendous drop in the price of cattle had little effect upon the retail price of meat. In Wyoming, where cattle is one of the chief industries, the house-wife pays almost as much for a pound of meat as when cows sold at \$10 a hundred pounds. This would normally mean that the middleman was making a great profit but, since the NRA, the high retail price in the butcher shop is due to the rise in overhead and the drop in consumption. The middleman had to keep the prices high if he wanted to stay in business.

In Omaha, the Chamber of Commerce, which has been issuing statements that business is improving, has no facts on which to base its optimistic announcements. E. Zachau, of the Chamber, who has made numerous statistical surveys, told me frankly:

"I have no figures; I base my feeling that things are better only on what I hear. Of course, 1934 marked a definite business increase in the retail world here, with some even reporting a profit."

"To what can that be attributed?"

"Some of it is traceable to purchases by farmers who have been guaranteed forty-five cents a bushel for their corn."

"How many are unemployed in this town?"

"The U. S. Chamber of Commerce asked us that and I answered that survey with a guess that here we have about five per cent of the number of employees out of work."

"Five per cent? Isn't that an awfully low figure?"

"That's my guess," he insisted.

"Didn't you make an actual survey to find out?"

"No, there was no way to find out without detailed investigation. I based my guess on what I heard."

"How about wage scales?"

"That was included in the U. S. Chamber's survey and



my guess was that the minimum wage scale had become stabilized as the maximum in many places."

"You mean that the NRA produced a general cutting of wages?"

"We hear that there has been a general cutting of wages. The so-called minimum is now the maximum."

"I see. Has there been any effort on the part of employers to speed up production so as to make up for the decreased hours?"

"Well, we hear complaints about the speed-up, especially in piece work."

"And the prices of commodities?"

"They have increased—anywhere from 20 to 40 per cent."

"Then actually the picture we have is a drop in the price of cattle and cuts in wages all around. The meat-packers must have made enormous profits."

Zachau hesitated.

"I guess so," he said finally.

In the bituminous and anthracite coal fields, the curtailing of working hours meant exactly nothing. The miners never worked a full week. The establishment of minimum wage scales meant equally as much, for despite the government and the unions, operators devised innumerable schemes to violate the wage-scale agreements. The miners offered little resistance, because of their anxiety to get any kind of work at any price.

In the Pennsylvania anthracite fields the earnings of those miners who work are so low that sweatshop silk mills and cigar factories moved into the area to employ miners' wives and daughters. Just how much of this "female labor" has been thrown upon the market is unknown, but officials say the number "is quite considerable." In these sweatshops, the minimum wage is the maximum, the speed-up is terrific, and no one dares to protest because of the countless hordes

waiting outside, ready even for the killing speed-up if only they can earn something to eat.

The relief agencies in this area keep no record of how many silk and cigar workers are on the relief lists. It was quite evident to me that public officials wink their eyes at these sweatshops rather than interfere with anything which helps to decrease the demand for public relief.

In Youngstown, I asked Andrew O. Fleming, secretary of the Community Corporation which acts as a sort of clearing house for charity appeals, if the number of relief applicants had decreased since the "New Deal."

"It put a number of people getting relief to work," he said, "but exhausted resources threw many others onto the charity lists, so that the number of applicants actually increased since the NRA."

Such examples could be multiplied indefinitely all over the country. They give a pretty accurate picture of government "help" in action.





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## THE AMERICAN WORKER STIRS

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### VIII. BUSINESS MEN ARE BEWILDERED

CLARENCE KUESTER, secretary of the Charlotte Chamber of Commerce, is the only business man of the several hundred I talked with during my survey of the country who knew how to end the depression.

"Why, partner," he told me earnestly, "the trouble with this country is that we have lost faith. It's faith that makes things go round. The wealth of the world comes from the ground, doesn't it? Of course it does! Well, we still have the ground, haven't we? We still have our resources. The way to end the depression is simple: just put the people back to work!"

With an air of finality he spat a mouthful of tobacco juice into a shiny brass spittoon at his feet.

"Maybe you're right, but there's just one more question. How are they going to be put back to work when there are no jobs? How will you make jobs for them?"

"Ah," said Mr. Kuester, "if I could answer that I'd be the smartest man in this country."

Mr. Kuester is the average business man, well-meaning, earnest, eager to do what he can for his business, his com-

munity, and his country. The American business man sometimes knows his immediate business, but once outside this field, the economic and political events which are leaving a profound effect upon his own affairs are viewed through an almost impenetrable fog. During his whole business life, he had felt his feet on firm ground, never troubling to understand the economic system under which he operated; and now that the very ground upon which he had built is crumbling under him, he is utterly bewildered.

I found the American business man ignorant not only of the broad economic forces at work in his own business but of general conditions in his own city, let alone his state or the nation. Certainly, problems of available labor, wage scales, and retail sales affect every business man in the community, yet I did not meet three men who could speak intelligently on these matters. The basic foundation on which all business rests—supply and demand—is a subject foreign to practically all our business people.

Take Perley G. Flint, treasurer of Field & Flint Co., manufacturers of high-grade shoes in Brockton. Mr. Flint is a typical successful business man. He made a "go" of his business. Now that business is not so good, he no more knows what to do than most workers in his factory. With the exception of facts, figures, statistics regarding his own plant, he is a bewildered man floundering in the maze of events that caught him as well as other shoe manufacturers in the world-wide depression. When I asked him what he thought could be done to avoid getting deeper into the slough of depression or to increase the pay envelopes of his workers, he stared out of the window thoughtfully and finally said:

"I don't know. I really don't know. I guess the only thing we can do is to give these college professors running the country a chance. Let's cheer for them. Maybe they'll get us out of it."

"But suppose things don't get better even if you cheer the college professors?"

Again a long pause: "Damned if I know. We'll sure be in a hell of a mess, won't we?"

"You're a leader in industry in this town," I persisted. "Men like you are running this city, state, and nation. Surely you must figure on what will happen if all the cheering doesn't help."

He shook his head regretfully.

"I hate to think of what will happen if things don't pick up. But we can be hopeful. We are all hopeful. You see, all we need is to get money in circulation again. But one thing I do know, people will not starve to death. I don't believe they will. No, sir. I don't see any sense in people starving to death in this country. Some way will have to be found to feed them—either through taxation or voluntary contributions. I guess we'll have to arrange things so that the fellow who gets anything will have to give it up. Maybe big taxation."

"What would be your attitude if the government, to meet its bills and feed citizens who can't get work, put a fifty per cent tax on all you have?"

"I wouldn't like it," he said simply.

"What would you say to the government taking over the whole shoe industry?"

"That would be an awful calamity," he said quickly. "I am opposed to government ownership. That would be Sovietizing things. There is a big difference between making rules for an industry as the government does, and taking things over.

"Business now is laying down its own rules. The day of cut-throat competition is past. Eventually, of course, things seem to be tending toward standardization—the minimum we have to pay in wages, what we can sell for, and so on. It



seems to be a trend toward an eventual dictatorship over industry.

"Little business men who cannot stand the pace will drop out, like little storekeepers drop out in competition with chain stores. Yes, we're heading toward a centralized control over the shoe industry—perhaps over all industries. I think it's a good thing. Maybe it's our only solution. But I am opposed to government ownership. It will stifle initiative."

"Look at the mess individual initiative and cut-throat competition got you and the country into," I suggested.

"That's true. What I mean is I favor a modified individualism."

"What's that?"

He shook his head and laughed.

"What do you attribute the troubles in the shoe industry to? Over-production?"

"Not by a long shot. Under-consumption."

"How will you increase consumption if the consumers have no jobs to earn money with which to buy?"

"I don't know," he said thoughtfully. "I'm not smart enough."

He sighed and added, "It's a vicious circle any way you look at it."

Clear across the continent in the little lumber town of Longview, Wash., I asked J. McClelland, owner of the Longview *Daily News* the same main question I asked Mr. Kuester and Mr. Flint.

"The way out," he said, fumbling with some papers on his desk, "is to recognize the law of supply and demand and adjust ourselves to it."

"Isn't that what Roosevelt's trying to do?"

He shrugged his shoulders.

"I don't know what Roosevelt's trying to do. The best I can do is to be fatalistic about it and hope that he knows.

The whole country is following his leadership blindly. With no one knowing what it is all about, the best we can do is hope that the men we placed at the helm know what they are doing and will somehow pull us out of it. Our own conditions, for instance, are vastly improved over what they were a year ago this time."

"In what way?"

"The lumber companies are showing a profit——"

"How about the majority of citizens—the workers. Have conditions improved for them over what they were a year ago?"

He looked thoughtfully at a paper cutter on his desk.

"If business improves, the worker's wage scale will naturally improve. Of course, it is true that wages have not increased in proportion to the rise in the cost of living."

"Then actually when you say conditions have improved you mean it has improved for business and not the people."

He did not answer. I said:

"Men like you are running the cities, states, and the nation. Surely you see that this effort to balance supply and demand is chiefly beneficial to business and is not taking into consideration the workers—the demand. The workers are being left out in the cold. Without the worker you can't have the demand. So—where are you heading?"

"I don't know," he said. "I can't see where we are heading or towards what. We're going along on faith with no man knowing what tomorrow will bring. You take my business, for instance. I can't make any plans for the future because I haven't the slightest idea of what conditions will be tomorrow. I don't know what my advertising income will be because my advertisers don't know whether things will sell. If we have more inflation it will throw everything out of gear for a while—wages, income, sales. I need machinery, but I don't dare buy on credit or pay cash because I don't know what the dollar will be worth tomorrow or how I will

be able to meet my bills. There are many others like me who are bewildered and can't make any plans because we don't know what's coming.

"Take the reduction in the working hours. I reduced mine the same as everyone else. Yet I cannot stand any more overhead, so I, along with everybody else, am looking for ways and equipment to speed up production."

"And by doing that there is no provision made for those who are out of work?"

"It looks like a vicious circle, doesn't it? With everybody seeking to mechanize their plants, we will speed up production so as to get as much done as before; and with machine progress, in due time, we'll have over-production again. Take our farms around here, for instance. We've had the greatest demand for fertilizer we've had in years. Why? Because of the decreased acreage. We agree to curtail production on our land by a certain number of acres. This raises the price of produce. But the farmer wants to make as much as possible, so he is intensively fertilizing his land, trying to get the most out of what land he can plow. So we'll have a great crop and a drop in prices again."

"With the tendency to mechanize plants to overcome the curtailing of hours, what will we do with the unemployed?"

"I think we're confronted with a permanent problem of unemployment," he said thoughtfully. "And to this problem is added the fact that business can now pick the cream of available workers which lets out so many men who were once able to get along when there was a great demand for labor. Today, only the cream of young, healthy, strong labor can get jobs."

"What will we do with older workers, with the old who have given their lives to the building of American industry?"

"Well, we passed old-age pensions in this state but we haven't the funds to take care of them. Most of this social legislation has been just gestures. We pass them so the

people will be pacified, but we can't do anything about the bills because we haven't the money."

"But what will happen? Somehow the old must be taken care of or they will rise along with the young who cannot get work."

He nodded in agreement.

"Our whole economic structure is very uncertain," he said slowly.

"Do you mean that as the moulder of public opinion in this town, let alone your influence in the state, the best you can tell your people is that you do not know what is going on, where we are heading, or what it is all about—that you are utterly bewildered? You must tell them something. They read your editorials. That is their guidance, their meat."

"Whatever appears in my paper they read carefully, especially editorial notes, and there's no sense in putting on a false front. They know that we are as dazed as they are. There is really a hunger among our people for some guidance, some interpretation of the events which are so deeply affecting their lives. Our most popular columns in the paper are the interpretive columns, interpreting national affairs, economic affairs. They want to know the meaning of all this that's happening. They look to us and to the columns to tell them. And we can't. We can't because we don't know ourselves."

"Well, if you don't know the way out, what do you think caused the depression?"

He smiled apologetically.

"I think it was due entirely to our lack of planning for the future."

This feeling that failure to plan our economic life is responsible for the depression is widespread among the more intelligent men who are running their communities. The state of Washington, for instance, appointed a Com-



mission of Nine to plan for its future so as to prevent fresh catastrophes like the current depression. Mr. McClelland is one of the nine. The Commission was given a spacious room in the state capitol for meetings and authority to call on the staffs of two universities for advice and guidance. The Commission met several times. University professors sat in and gave them swell notions of what the future should be like.

Mr. McClelland sighed when he told me about being a member of the Brain Trust. It is only fair to say *he* didn't call the Commission a Brain Trust.

"What happened?"

"Well, we met and the professors gave us their theories——"

"What were they?"

"Well, you see, all the professors had different theories——"

"Yes?"

"So I said, 'These are all fine, but where do we start?' and nobody knew."

"So what did you do?"

"So we went home," McClelland smiled ruefully.

The business man, nurtured on cut-throat competition in the struggle for immediate profits, does not realize that the price of wheat in the Argentine affects the price of shoes in Nebraska. What vague notions of economics he clings to have been picked up indirectly from the "authorities" in economics who are themselves befuddled.

The many different theories held by professors of economics and the bewilderment of the business men whom they guide is not confined to the state of Washington. Our economic life, based upon competition in production and distribution, cannot avoid industrial anarchy. The realization that this anarchy threatens not only their business but the capitalist state is evidenced by the many schemes offered



for a planned method of production and distribution. But, being competitive in its character, each group of business follows the guidance of its own economists who advise it for its own special interests.

University professors approach economic problems from a group or national interest or both, whereas economics is essentially international. A correct perspective of economic events can be attained only when they are viewed as international phenomena, and a plan to balance production and consumption necessarily must eliminate competition. Such planned economy, if followed to its logical conclusion, would destroy the profit system, and thus capitalism. In an effort to avoid this outcome, we see capitalist economists offering different theories which, ignoring the internationalism of economics, lead their followers into blind alleys where, in their confusion, they squabble among themselves, as in the national and various state "Brain Trusts."

This bewilderment of our scholarly economic guides is naturally reflected in the business men who follow their advice. In every area I visited, I always asked representative business, banking, and industrial leaders of the community what they thought caused the depression and what, in their opinion, was the way out. The answers were uniformly vague, just repetitions of some phrase heard or read, and in a number of instances simply absurd. Specific areas, I found, had the same ideas, whether it was the worker or the employer. National and world affairs were viewed from immediate local interests. In industrial areas, the point of view was one, in the cotton belt another, in the wheat area still another, and still other views in different mining centers.

So far as the Chambers of Commerce throughout the country are concerned, they mirror the thoughts of their members accurately. The members are dazed and so are the Chambers. I did not meet one secretary who thoroughly understood the economic events transpiring in his own com-

munity, let alone the country. After visiting many of them, I was forced to the conclusion that the function of a Chamber of Commerce is to sing the praises of its own community, issue exaggerated statements about the grand possibilities in its own area, and at the same time maintain a profound ignorance of conditions in its own city.

To ask the secretary of a Chamber of Commerce how many workers there are in his community, how many are unemployed, what per cent business increased or decreased during a given period, would usually be met with a shrug of the shoulders and a statement that it was pretty hard to tell though they were certain it had increased. In the largest cities, the Chambers maintain their own statistical departments which sometimes have this data, but once outside the largest cities a Chamber of Commerce is a parrot singing the praise of a paradise. They can tell you of some swell swamp land or desert field upon which to build a factory; they can tell you how easily the railroads can take your product out of your back yard, but the basic foundation on which all industry rests—supply and demand—is an academic subject to them. And this ignorance, which I found everywhere, gives an excellent indication of the broadness and far vision of the leaders of our community—the business men, the industrialists, and the bankers—those who are running us. I had almost added—ragged.

The American business man talks glibly of production, distribution, wage scales, markets, profits. He knows that quantity production means cheaper production and he strives for it, for only by cheaper production can he market his goods against his competitor. This striving for markets determines the rate of production but not the rate of consumption.

The business man, interested only in immediate problems, does not consider the inexorable economic laws which make for over-production just so long as the competitive

system exists; nor does he consider the indirect influences of apparently unrelated things which profoundly affect his business. If he does consider them, the struggle for immediate profits between himself and his competitor eliminates taking steps to rectify a situation which eventually hurts his own business. An illustration of the business man's attitude to these indirect influences upon his business is found in Roy F. Morse, general manager of the Long-Bell Sales Corporation in Longview, Wash.

Mr. Morse, an efficient, kindly man, was happy to cooperate in giving me what data he could. He could tell me that the general slump in the lumber industry began in 1929, due to a lot of substitutes in building, the amount of business his firm did in any given year, wage scales, rents at the company-owned houses, the number of workers he employed before the depression and the number he is employing now; he could even tell me about the rise in the price of food stuffs. But when I asked what happened to his former employees whom his company had been unable to absorb since the depression, he shook his head.

"They have gone to the four corners of the earth."

He said it in a factual tone, the tone that says: "I am not responsible for them after they are no longer needed in my business."

"How many are living on charity?" I asked.

He shrugged his shoulders.

"I can't tell."

"Some of your former workers have gone to the land. Have you any idea how many are making a go of it?"

"I haven't the slightest idea."

That in the long run these men, about whom business is so indifferent, are the ultimate purchasers of the products of business does not seem to be considered. Upon the question of whether these former lumber men and other workers in this country as well as in foreign lands earn enough to

build their own homes or pay a decent rent, hinges the answer to how much lumber will be used in repairs and new building. But these factors seem so far removed from the immediate need of earning profits, that what happens to the people who live in houses which are built of lumber is ignored.



## IX. MOULDERS OF OPINION

THE business man, whether in a large industrial community or an almost isolated farming village, usually forms his opinions from what he reads in the local newspapers, and, during my survey, I talked with a number of editors—the men who mould the opinion of their communities. I found that they themselves are far from clear about the meaning of the events they record.

Since most of our population is in small towns, the knowledge and discernment of the country editor is even more important than that of the metropolitan one. The news published in the small paper and what it comments upon editorially is chewed over in the country store and discussed in the home.

When I walked into the one-room office of the *Lincoln County Times* in Brookhaven, Miss., L. H. Bowen, the editor, was writing busily with the stub of a pencil at a small table cluttered with newspapers. He had a beaming, good-natured face, half-hidden under a battered old felt hat. He peered at me shrewdly through his gold-rimmed spectacles when I asked what he thought caused the depression.

"The trouble with this county and this state and I reckon with the whole country is that everybody's playing the great American game: politics," he drawled. "There's politics in Washington, there's politics in Jackson, politics in Lincoln County.

"I don't want to say anything about this county that might be used against it, but it strikes me as very queer that the first thing most of those who got CWA jobs did was to pay

their poll tax. That enables them to vote, you know, and those who are handing out the jobs, want voters.

"In addition to that, many farmers who are well able to take care of themselves went to the government for relief; or if they didn't go, they sent their tenants instead of giving them advances. Everybody views the government as a great big trough and when the slops were poured, everybody stuck his snout in. That's what's the matter with this county and the whole country."

"But what do you think caused the depression?" I asked again.

"The crash of the Lincoln County First National Bank in 1931."

"Why did it crash?"

"They had loaned money to the farmers and couldn't collect."

"Then the price of cotton nationally had something to do with the failure of these farmers to meet their obligations?"

"Of course. But it was the crash of the bank here that started everything going downhill in this county. You know"—he paused to choose his words carefully—"the real trouble with our people is that they don't know what to do with their money when they get it. That's really the main cause of the depression. This county and the whole country went on a spending spree. It wasn't that we spent our money, but we mortgaged our salaries and our wages for months and years to come by buying things on the installment plan. People bought beyond their means. Look at autos. I've seen \$25-a-week clerks driving around in cars that mortgaged their salaries for two years. We were a people living high. The volume of debt mounted and when the rank and file couldn't meet their debts and couldn't buy any more, production stopped and the crash followed."

The average business man, long nurtured on individual-

ism, frequently thinks that a lack of individual initiative has much to do with the hunger of so many millions who want jobs and cannot get them, and Mr. Bowen, when I asked what he thought of the local farmers, had that view.

"They're lazy, if you want to know what I think," he said. "And what I think is thought by a good many in this community—those who count, who are running things. These farmers plow about February or March. By August the cotton is baled. What do they do during the late fall and winter? Why, they just sit around the country stores cussin' the government."

I had heard this before. And I brought it up when I was talking with a group of farmers, and one said:

"That's about true—our workin' about half the time. But you tell me, mister, if you worked from sunup to sundown for six months in the year and got nothin' for it, would you work the other six months for the same price?"

Not understanding what it is all about, the business man grasps at almost anything, no matter how absurd, in his floundering efforts to find a firm foothold again in the economic scheme of things. Big industrialists, bankers, and politicians tell him that what he needs is faith and optimism; he is shown charts showing how we rode out former depressions into a greater prosperity, and these he grasps at hungrily.

I attended a number of business men's, Chamber of Commerce, and Retail Merchants' Association luncheons and was amazed at their utter lack of comprehension of what is happening and at their forced gaiety. They kept telling one another that the turn had been made, that we were out of the depression. They talked of the return to the grand old days of 1929. Since government money started flowing, some business men were able even to pay off debts. To them this was evidence of the upturn. The papers, too, quote prominent persons—those "in the know"—and they say things

are better. The papers point out that the government has put a certain number to work—which means more money flowing into business. But these leaders of our communities neither inquire nor care that despite all the millions the government has spent, despite the slight increase in business, the number of people asking for charity in their own cities is increasing at a terrific pace.

At one luncheon I attended, a small business man who viewed things in a broad sense said that he thought we were heading for another fall worse than the one we had. He was hooted down, called unpatriotic, and so generally upbraided that he left the room!

The failure to understand the economic events transpiring not only in his community but in his own business has heightened the class distinctions between employer and employee. The employee made desperate by wage cuts and the speed-up is demanding a living wage and the employer feels that labor is keeping him from getting back on his feet and is taking every step possible to counteract unionization and its inevitable organized demands.

In Longview, Wash., J. McClelland explained:

"A year ago there was no organization of labor in this city to amount to anything. Today everything in town is organized under the A. F. of L. Union labor has gone on this way month after month with the leaders doing nothing about getting them the benefits of organization until now labor has gotten to the point where even the conservative members are getting tired of inactivity and dropping out. In an effort by union officials to keep up the members' interest, they have started on a militant tack, so that the situation in this town is the most unsettled it has been in ten years. The unions are mostly of the conservative A. F. of L. kind, but they are new and with no experience and they are already becoming obsessed with their own power.

"The foreign element in opposition to the profit system,



like the Finns, is tending to open co-operative stores. The foreign element trades with them and the state Federation of Labor caters to them. This trend to co-operatives is seriously interfering with our stores and we are very apprehensive lest they become too overbearing with their new-found sense of power and cause trouble."

In California, the knowledge that Communists are securing firm footholds not only among agricultural workers but among stationary classes has contributed to a distinct fear of reds by employers and efforts to undermine active unions by discovering in them a "red menace." This latter effort failed and added to the irritability of the employers. On the West Coast the workers do not seem to care whether the group achieving better wages for them is red or purple, especially since the reds have chalked up so high a percentage of victories in agricultural strikes.

I asked G. F. Thomas, Secretary of the Fresno Chamber of Commerce:

"Don't you think the migratory worker is entitled to some of the pick-up in business the farmer is experiencing?"

"Sure he's entitled to it, but the farmer can't pay it until he gets himself all straightened out."

"And what will the migratory worker do in the meantime?"

Mr. Thomas, representing business and farming and banking, shrugged his shoulders.

Mr. Thomas himself had had a small auto store and when economic events beyond his control ruined small automobile stores, his was among them. He had had a home and that, too, he told me, went. But he was "a good guy," a believer in the modern business methods which resulted in his losing his business and home, and when he had to have some kind of job, he was made secretary of the Chamber of Commerce.

The depression did not change Mr. Thomas much. Essen-

tially, he is still the small business man who believes in cut-throat competition but of "a regulated sort like curtailing production so too great a crop will not ruin the market." Mr. Thomas is hopeful that one day, perhaps in the near future, he will reopen his store, a hope shared by other ruined business men who see things "picking up a little." Hence, he looks with more than a little trepidation at organizational activities, especially the inroads made by Communists and the measure of sympathy they are receiving from conservative union labor.

Mr. Thomas mirrors the jitters local business feels about the "reds." His whole attitude is that of most business men, politicians, and farmers with whom I talked; even their words varied only slightly.

Despite trousers pressed to a razor edge, a fairly clean face, and my unaccented speech, Mr. Thomas looked upon me with suspicion. It was unheard of that a person seeking a picture of what happened since the depression should ask questions about the number of farmers who lost their land or the wage scale and living-conditions of migratory workers. No one had ever cared about migratory workers before the Communists started organizing them; ergo, anyone who asked questions about them must be a "red," or if not a "red," at least sympathetic.

"Whom do you represent?" he asked suspiciously.

"No one. I'm a writer gathering material for a book."

"Whom do you write for?"

"A publisher."

"What sort of books do they publish?"

"All kinds."

"What kind of a book are you going to write?"

"An accurate picture as I find it. All I want are facts."

This quizzing continued for some five or ten minutes. He reverted to it repeatedly during our conversation. Finally he called up a book store to find out if I had ever had any-

thing published. When he got an affirmative answer he turned to me with another suspicious look.

"How do I know you're John L. Spivak?"

I proved my identity by letters, cards, monograms, hat-band initials, and underwear. "What's the difference who I am?" I asked. "I'm not trying to sell you anything or take anything from you. All I'm asking for are facts and figures which should be public property."

"Okay, what do you want?"

In the course of my questions it was inevitable that I ask for comparisons of wages, loss of farms, methods of importing migratory workers, etc. The moment I asked about the poor farmer or the migratory worker, the deep suspicious lights would appear again in his eyes.

"What do you want to know that for?"

"They are records showing changes which occurred in the past few years."

"What are you going to use them for?"

"For a book," I repeated wearily.

"That sort of information wouldn't do the country any good. Red agitators would seize on it to cause more trouble."

"Are conditions in the San Joaquin Valley so bad that red agitators could use them for propaganda?"

"No, sir!" he exclaimed indignantly. "But things are pretty ticklish here. How do I know you're not a Communist? You'd be surprised what sort of people are Communists now or at least sympathetic to them—clean-cut, hundred per cent Americans, college men, writers. God! You don't know where you find them! For all I know you may be a Communist getting information so the reds can come in here and organize the migratory workers. We've had a lot of trouble with reds. In Tulare and Kern counties the Communists organized strikes that pretty near wrecked the farmers. You know, if cotton isn't picked when it's ready, or fruit or vegetables, there's no crop and the farmer

is ruined. There's nothing for him to do but become a migratory worker himself. Several migratory workers were killed during the trouble with the reds.

"Now these Communists are organizing here in Fresno County and we're trying to take every possible step to prevent it. Some of the farmers are getting their shotguns ready, the American Legion has organized a vigilante committee, and we don't want any facts or figures made public which will give these reds ammunition."

"This is the first Chamber of Commerce I visited which is afraid to give me any information. Your wages and working conditions must be terrible if you fear they will make red propaganda."

"It's the Communists. If we didn't have those damned Communists here, we wouldn't mind telling you how bad things have been."

Like most Americans who have been hurt and take out their resentment on the individual or institution which has become to them symbolic of the economic system which oppresses them, the cattle-rancher's indignation is directed against the banks and bankers, instead of the workers, with whom he has had no difficulty.

The local bankers who helped to ruin the cattle raisers by bad advice are not blamed. The rancher is convinced that the local banker would not have sold him out had it not been for a banking system which enabled a few powerful eastern banks to dominate the local bank and its clients. And since it was the banks which hurt him, the resentment is felt against banks and not against the economic system which makes such powerful concentration of wealth and financial domination possible.

I asked one rancher, who in 1928 had been well on the way to wealth but was now penniless and running his former ranch on a salary basis, how he felt about the turn of events. He shook his head grimly.



"I'm gettin' pretty radical about all this," he said.

"Just what do you mean when you say 'radical'?"

"I don't mean a revolution," he said quickly. "But we sure got to change things the way they're being run now."

"What things do you want to change?"

"This whole system of doing business," he said vaguely.

"What sort of system would you like to see substituted?"

He shook his head.

"I don't know. Any kind of a system that will prevent this sort of stuff from happening all over again. I think if we can change the banking system, it will prevent these big banks in the east from ruining the small banks and thus keep us from ruin."

"Suppose changing the banking system doesn't work?"

"I don't know. But the government's got to develop some scheme where the farmers won't be wiped out entirely."

It was obvious that he and the others with whom I talked had no definite idea of what change they wanted or how it should be brought about. He was restless, and with this restlessness there was a sense of being swept by uncontrollable tides towards destruction, and he knew of nothing to do except wish for a shifting wind.

The collection and distribution of charity in each city is on the scale of a fairly big business, and heads of charity organizations, from the very nature of their work, have a more comprehensive knowledge of unemployment and hunger in their communities than the business man. These social-service workers exert tremendous influence on those with whom they come in contact, whether it be to ask for a contribution or to distribute the charity. Their understanding of economic conditions, then, is of more than passing interest.

I asked Andrew O. Fleming, secretary of the Community Corporation of Youngstown, a sort of clearing house for the various charity organizations:

"What do you think is the solution to this depression?"

He leaned back in his chair, pursed his lips together and thought long and carefully before he answered.

"The purchasing power of the people must be restored."

"How will you do that?"

"Isn't that what the government is trying to do?" he parried.

"I guess so. No one seems to know what the government is trying to do. But whatever it is, it has obviously failed, for the purchasing power of the masses is lower than it was before the NRA."

He thought that over carefully and shrugged his shoulders.

"A quarter of a century ago," he said slowly, "we had a depression and the automobile came out of the air. It gave work to thousands and increased purchasing power."

"Then you think the solution to this depression is to get something out of the air?"

"Well, take the building trades, for instance. There are countless numbers of people with no bathtubs. Let's put bathtubs into the homes. That would put a whole army of people to work—the bathtub manufacturers, carpenters, plasterers, painters."

"With property values dropping to incredible levels, with people unable to pay rent, and property owners unable to pay taxes, where will they get the money for all these improvements?"

"They could borrow from the government."

"After the property has been improved it will necessitate raising the rents to make up for the investment in bathtubs. The people can't pay their present rents; how will they get money for raised rents?"

Fleming shook his head.

"Somehow or other things will get better," he said finally. "We don't know when or how it will come, but it will come. We must have faith. This lack of faith, this very fear that

has caught the country in its grip has stopped credit and with credit stopped, we can't make progress."

While Fleming was giving me his ideas about bathtubs, Ray G. Hagstrom, director of a number of settlements in town, walked in. He, too, is one of the average persons running the community, forming the opinions of those with whom he comes in contact, and Fleming turned to him with a laugh.

"Hagstrom, maybe you have some ideas on the way out of this depression. What do you think is the cause and cure of all this?"

"That's what everybody wants to know," said the settlement director.

"You have the guidance of many people in your hands," I said. "You mould their thought, sometimes their very lives. Surely you must have thought about these problems."

"Oh, of course I've thought about them," Hagstrom said vaguely. "It seems to me that we need some fundamental changes in our economic system. When I say fundamental changes, I don't mean revolutionary changes," he added hastily. "I believe in the profit system. If you destroy initiative you destroy incentive."

"What changes do you think should be worked out?"

"That's a big order," he said with a shrug. "I don't know. We just need some changes."

"Everybody is saying we need changes but no one seems to know just what changes they want."

"I don't know. Maybe we ought to change our money system, or our credit system. I don't know."

"Was there any sign of unrest around here when people were on the verge of starving?"

"No," he said with a sign of enthusiasm. "The patience of the unemployed was surprising. It's a wonderful tribute to our people. They maintained their morale even under the most adverse circumstances."

"How much of that do you think was due to the religious spirit in the people?"

"A great deal. And I think on the basis of that question I can answer your first one—the one about the cure of the depression. I think we need a return to Christ and Christianity—that will solve your depression."

"Didn't Christ advocate meekness and humility?"

"That's right."

"I have observed that where the people have been meek and humble, they got less and less to eat, but where they organized and demanded work, pay increases, or more food allowances, they got them. So isn't Christian meekness and humility working for the benefit of the employer while it lets the worker sink into a state of destitution?"

"But this life isn't all that matters," said Mr. Hagstrom.

In Tulsa, Mrs. Emil Solomon, executive secretary of Family Service, believes the depression was caused purely by the "selfishness of the rich man." When she uttered this phrase she leaned towards me secretively. It sounded a little too radical, and in this area people are terrified lest they be considered radical.

"Let's pick on Ford, for instance," she said. "Who made him the rich man he is? The people who worked for him. Are they not entitled to some of that wealth?"

"In what form?"

"In a little increased wages," she said confidentially. "A more equal distribution of wealth by increasing wages so the worker can buy the things he produces. Have the workers been paid for their contributions to his wealth? I don't believe they have. Then, take the storekeeper and the big chain stores. Big business has pushed the little business man out. The little storekeeper can't compete with the chain stores. You don't realize how many storekeepers are now getting charity—just forced out of business by the chain stores. Something ought to be done about it."



"You mean prohibit concentration of large chain stores?"

"Concentration is all right, but it should be controlled."

"Like through the NRA?"

"The NRA is all right if the politicians didn't run it."

"What are you going to do with the surplus labor which cannot be absorbed in industry?"

"Open up the lands. Put them there."

As I rose to go, she thought of another thing.

"Oh, yes," she said. "Then there's the stock market. That's got to be controlled."

The stock market. On a lonely farm in Mississippi I heard a share-cropper talk of controlling the stock market. On a deserted wharf in New Orleans I heard a Negro talk of controlling the stock market. And here again. The stock market crash started the depression and they feel that control of stocks somehow would have prevented it.

Repetition of phrases they have read or heard. . . .

## **X. ORGANIZED LABOR AND ITS BRIGHT LEADERS**

THE Omaha Central Labor Union's headquarters is in the basement of an old church. When you enter the dimly lighted place, you almost stumble against a round table covered with dirty old oilcloth. Half a dozen unshaved old codgers sat around it playing pinochle with a worn deck when I walked in. One of the hangers-on went to call John McMahon, secretary of the Central Labor Union, for me. The secretary was in some corner of the church, which had been set aside for his office, and which I was not allowed to enter. McMahon came out, his cap astride one ear. I explained what I wanted.

"How do I know what's going on in Omaha?" he demanded sourly. "I don't know how many people are unemployed or how many are in the unions."

"Well, as secretary, don't you have an idea of what's happened to union labor since 1929?"

"I've only been here two years."

"Have you been a labor man long?"

"Seventeen years," he said proudly.

"Has there been a drop in union membership since the depression?"

Mr. McMahon turned a watery eye on me and shifted his cap to a sharper angle.

"Drop in membership!" he exclaimed. "We didn't have nothin' to drop!"

"I mean those you did have?"

"Sure they dropped. Nobody had any work. Naturally they dropped."

"Has there been a pick up since Roosevelt guaranteed collective bargaining?"

"I guess so. I hear they're trying to organize them in the packing houses, but we don't know nothin' about that. Some of our locals are getting a lot of members, but the dues all go to the national headquarters."

There was a plaintive air about him when he said that.

"Was there much actual want among the union men during the past few years?"

"Sure, but they wouldn't go register with the government for aid. They said it was not in the law that they had to register and it isn't, so they wouldn't register."

"Too proud, eh?"

"I guess so, but they wouldn't register."

"What did they do?"

"Oh, some of them got jobs—about half of the union men here went to work on CWA projects."

"How about now when the CWA is out and only about a third of the former employees are on the list?"

He shook his head in bewilderment.

"What was the sentiment of the union men during the depression?"

"What sentiment?"

"How did they feel?"

"About what?"

"About the depression."

"Oh, the depression. They didn't like it."

In only one area—the oil fields, where Wildcat Williams and his pistol rule supreme—did I find the average American Federation of Labor leader familiar with current problems. Usually the leaders are as familiar with their own union conditions, let alone general conditions, as Mr. McMahon. Union leaders and the workers are as much in the dark as employers. The secretary of a local can tell you how many members he has, what the dues are and give you a

general idea of what irritates the workers most; the president or secretary of a local labor council can tell you how many locals are affiliated with his body and approximately how many members they have. In a few rare instances, they can give you facts and figures on the rise in living costs in comparison with wage scales, but on the broader aspects of working and living conditions, these leaders of labor are lost and the worker himself is indifferent.

Outside of knowing that his own wages are insufficient to make ends meet, neither the workers nor their leaders have any idea of what is going on about them. I found A. F. of L. organizers ignorant of what is going on in their own communities; moreover, most of them showed a distinct lack of interest in organizing the workers. The NRA gave them an unprecedented opportunity to organize, but in most areas the organizers wait until the workers literally throw themselves into the A. F. of L. lap by asking for charters. In Omaha, organizers are not even trying to get men into the unions. Packing-house workers are about the only ones being organized, and those on a very small scale. The other trades, in the words of John McMahon, "are shot to pieces. There ain't no unions here. We got about two locals that's functioning."

The depression almost completely shattered organized labor in the United States. Since the NRA's guarantee of collective bargaining, the A. F. of L. made tremendous strides in regaining some of its losses and organizing hitherto unorganized crafts. The membership, which joined with high hopes, gained little or nothing because of the conservative leadership, and consequently there is everywhere a great unrest within the rank and file which threatens to disrupt the A. F. of L., and a strong resentment against the government for not enforcing the code agreements, let alone the guarantee of collective bargaining. The amazing thing to me, after talking with the average A. F. of L. leaders, is not that



union labor disintegrated in time of stress, but that under such leadership it ever gained anything.

This opposition against A. F. of L. indifference to wage cuts, speed-up, and the stagger system sometimes resulted in independent unions being formed, as in Brockton and the coal fields. In the New England city, when work became scarce and even the job-holder could not earn a living, wage cut after wage cut was put into effect by the manufacturers with the approval of the Boot and Shoe Makers Union, an A. F. of L. affiliate. The union lost membership, for the workers saw no sense in paying dues to a union which helped manufacturers reduce wages. In the midst of this unrest, manufacturers and union officials set up a dictatorship over the locals to aid in reducing wages without the trouble of going to an arbitration board, as was provided for in the labor agreement. The rumblings of revolt grew to open rebellion, and the Brotherhood of Shoe and Allied Craftsmen was born and supplanted the A. F. of L. union.

In the bituminous fields, excluding the inescapable fact that coal-mining is a sick industry, the once powerful United Mine Workers of America is pretty much shattered. The miners' struggle against A. F. of L. leaders like John L. Lewis is epitomized in the Illinois coal fields where the latest independent union of any strength is the Progressive Miners movement which used radical phrases and revolutionary terms to draw large numbers to its ranks. Today the new union has a total membership of 35,000, with about 14,000 employed. The U. M. W. of A. claims a larger membership, with about 17,000 working. The rest of the vast number of coal-diggers are unemployed.

When I walked into the Progressive local headquarters in Collinsville, Ill., there were some twenty-odd miners sitting about, reading the local papers, talking among themselves, spitting their chewing-tobacco into well-filled spittoons. They told me the long and bitter story of their disillu-

sionment, of fights and struggles, steadily falling wage scales, and starvation, yet all spoke in so dead a tone that when I left them I had the impression that here, indeed, was hopelessness. Yet underneath this hopelessness one could detect an occasional flash of that spirit which had startled the country, which made them take rifles to drive strike-breakers out of the mines. But they are leaderless. I felt that if a leader whom they could trust came to them today, they would be the most militant and aggressive workers in the country.

"We had a lot of hope that the Progressives would bring us real leadership," I heard repeatedly, "but all they are interested in is the dues."

One old miner complained to me bitterly:

"I got a job with the CWA which was just about bringing in enough for my family to eat, but these Progressive leaders told me that if I had a job, no matter what it was, I had to continue paying dues if I wanted to stay in the union and ever hoped to work in the mines again. Everybody who has any kind of a job where he works forty hours a month must pay dues."

Today, the situation of the miners is tragic. Half of them no longer have lights in their homes; houses are falling into a bad state because rents are not paid. Some miners patch up the homes they once owned, still feeling an interest in them, and vast numbers are resorting to gardening to eke out their meager food supply and about ten thousand have completely vanished from the scenes of their former lives. I persistently asked what happened to those who once were miners, but not even union officials knew.

In the anthracite fields, I found the same increasing destitution, misery, and bitter resentment against conservative leadership. New unions crop up, fighting against U. M. W. of A. domination. There are two unions now in the anthracite field, the old U. M. W. of A. and the new Anthracite Miners of Pennsylvania, with each claiming the dominating

membership. But the story here is the story in Illinois. The industry is sick; thousands of coal-diggers live on charity, with no hope of ever working again because of the mechanization of the mines; those who do work even at the union wage scale do not earn enough to live; others work on the stagger system and earn still less; homes lost, family life disintegrating, faith even in the new union leadership waning rapidly, and in their despair they seethe with a deep and sullen unrest.

Though A. F. of L. and independent unions show marked signs of disintegrating, the membership, though still opposed to anything smacking of "radicalism," are getting to the state where they do not care if it is "radicalism," "Communism," or any other "ism," so long as it offers help.

I talked with a group of men in a small restaurant near the stockyards in South Omaha and the conversation was much like others in different sections of the country. Only one of these men had ever worked in a packing plant, but all had at one time earned a living wage. Today they were unable to earn enough to equal the charity allowance for food. They were disillusioned, morose. The occasional comments about the Soviet Union and a disintegrating capitalist system which appear in the papers they read have seeped into their consciousness; they do not understand what the Soviet Union is doing, but a few isolated bits of information stand out and in their present distracted state they grasp at them.

"There ain't no unemployment in Russia," said one chubby man with a fat belly. "I ain't no Red but they ain't got no unemployment in Russia."

"Yeah, there ain't no unemployment in Russia," said another. There was a note of envy in his voice. "But things is pretty bad there, too."

"But they got work—and maybe sometimes things'll get better there. But here—what we got here?"



"You talk like a Communist," said a third man.

"I don't care what I talk like," said the man who envied Russia's lack of unemployment. "If the Communists can get us jobs, then, by Jesus! I'd just as soon be a Communist!"

"Well, I wouldn't like to go that far," said another man, hesitantly. "But I'd sure like to see some changes. What I'd like to see is something that would give these belly-robbing sons of bitches what's comin' to them."

"Why don't you vote for your own candidate and let them do it by law?" I asked.

They looked at me pityingly.

"What's the sense in votin'?" one said disgustedly. "I ain't voted in three years. Don't see no sense to it. There's too many fools who vote the wrong way, who get fooled by the politician's promises. And if we vote the right way, the politicians steal the votes and put their own man in office anyway. So what's the use. You want to read the papers, mister, and see what the political machine does if you don't vote for their man. They just steal the votes. And it's the same all over the country—the same everywhere."

New Orleans, the South's greatest port, was an American Federation of Labor stronghold. Today, the Central Trades and Labor Council, the body representing organized labor, is nothing more than a name here—a name and a president who is playing local politics.

What happened to the International Longshoremen's Association since the depression happened virtually to all A. F. of L. unions in this southern city. Shortly after the depression set in, ship-owners started a slow weeding out of men. Instead of cutting wages, the owners merely dropped a longshoreman here and another there, giving the remaining ones the extra work. It was the beginning of the "speed-up system." The conservative union leaders told their members that they did not dare risk too vigorous a protest which might force them to call a strike. Since the union was use-



less for their defense, the longshoremen became completely demoralized. Ship-owners then instituted gradual wage cuts, despite agreements with the union. When the rank and file realized what was happening, they broke out in a strike against their leaders' advice. The strike was lost and since then company unions control "organized" labor.

The Central Trades and Labor Council, with James Dempsey as President, claims 75 affiliated locals out of about 100 locals in the city. It has no such number and no such membership as the claimed 15,000. When I was there it did not have even an office or a telephone. I spent several days hunting Mr. Dempsey. Finally the Community Chest, on which he represents labor, told me the Central Trades headquarters was on Bienville Street. There, in the office of a small local union, I was informed that the Central Trades only got its mail there and that the headquarters was on South Rampart Street. The latter address was a motion-picture operators' local and there I was told again that Dempsey did not appear except for appointments—that he had no definite headquarters. During the twelve days I was in New Orleans, I could not find Mr. Dempsey.

William L. Donnels, editor of the *Federationist*, organ of the Louisiana State Federation of Labor, was easier to find. I asked Mr. Donnels first how many workers there were in the Central Trades and Labor Council.

"I would rather not say. I'd rather you'd get that from Dempsey."

"How many locals are affiliated with the Central Trades?"

"There are about 100 locals in the city and about 75 affiliated with the Central Trades."

"And with all these, the Central Trades cannot afford an office or telephone?"

"We have an office." He gave me the address on Bienville Street. I told him that I had already been there, so he gave me the address on South Rampart Street. I told him that

I had been there too, and what the union officials at both places told me. The editor smiled and shrugged his shoulders.

"How many workers are there in New Orleans?"

"I don't know."

"How many are unemployed?"

"I should say about 75 per cent of them."

"How many of those who are employed work only part time?"

"About half of them."

I had already ascertained the answers to most questions I was asking, but I was curious to see how much this editor of labor's official publication really knew of conditions in his own city. I asked about relief work, charity, government jobs, union wage scales—he simply did not know. The only thing he had a fairly comprehensive idea about was the building trades, because he used to build houses and collect rent. Since the depression made it impossible for him to get his rents, he lost his properties. This worried him considerably.

"The full force of the depression," he said, "was not felt here until our whole banking system collapsed, taking with it the Homestead Banks. These, when they failed, brought about a loss of 30 per cent of the privately owned homes in the city. Before this there had been between 35,000 and 40,000 privately owned homes."

"How did the people feel when the banking system collapsed—when they lost their homes and were thrown upon charity?"

"They condemned the Homestead Banks. They lost confidence in the capitalistic system under which this country is run."

"What's the solution then—theirs and yours?"

"Organization through legitimate trade unions—craft organizations working through the A. F. of L."

We discussed his theory. He gave me the impression that

he has not the faintest idea of how even strong craft unions could possibly alter the capitalistic system. In the course of our conversation I brought him back to the membership of the Central Trades and finally he said confidentially:

"I'll tell you what figure Dempsey will give you. He'll place the number at 40,000 but I think it's somewhere around 15,000."

"With 15,000 members, the Central Trades cannot afford an office or telephone?"

"Well, not all of the members are paying dues. You see, so many of them have not worked for so long a time that they simply cannot pay dues. Once, when they fell six months in arrears, they were automatically dropped out, but now we have extended the arrears to a year and when they still cannot pay we accept a note for their dues."

"Then most of your membership is non-paying. You're just carrying dead heads along to swell the number of members?"

"I wouldn't call them dead heads. They are members in good standing who have given notes for their dues."

"How many have given notes?"

He smiled and shrugged his shoulders.

"About half. Maybe more."

"Then actually what the Central Trades claims, allowing for due exaggeration, is something like 7,000 paying members?"

"That's about right."

"How many of the workers who are working full time are earning a living wage?"

"Scarcely any."

"What's the union wage scale for carpenters, plasterers, bricklayers?" I asked.

"Seventy-five cents an hour," he said glibly.

These were the figures the government gave.

"How many are actually getting seventy-five cents an hour?"

"Very few. But that's the union scale."

"I know. What I want to know is how many are actually getting the rate you give?"

"Scarcely any," he said finally. "You see, they can't get it because of conditions. So they have to work for whatever they can get."

"What did the plasterers' or bricklayers' or carpenters' unions do about it?"

"Nothing. It wasn't practicable for the unions to do anything about it. Things were in a bad way and if a man couldn't get seventy-five cents an hour, then the union let him get what he could."

"Then the union was useless?"

"I wouldn't say that. That was the union scale, but they couldn't get it, see?"

"Then it isn't the union scale if they work for what they can get?"

"Sure it's the union scale. But they couldn't get it, so they got less."

"I see."

That the government's figures on union wage scales are as unreliable as its figures on unemployment was evident wherever I got the real earnings of union labor. Union wage scales are paper wage scales in almost every craft. I was particularly interested in the union scale of the building trades, because this is so frequently used as a base for comparisons between income and commodity prices. The answers I got varied only slightly from those Mr. Donnels gave me.

In Youngstown, O., John A. Morely, secretary of the United Labor Congress, tried to parry the question of how many union men were working for less than union wages.

"It would be hard to say. There has been some chiseling,



of course. Then there was an added difficulty, especially in the early years of the depression when some employers agreed to the union wage scale but wanted to pay the worker in notes on frozen bank accounts. This became pronounced throughout the city and it was hard to counteract, for the men were desperate for any kind of work and almost any kind of pay!"

"About what does a union man average when he works?"

"The union man working for a dollar an hour, for instance, would not average more than a day or a day and a half of work. So you see, no matter how much the wage scale is, they are unable to earn enough to live on."

The oil fields have strong union sympathies and an eager desire to organize in almost every craft but these are being tightly curbed by the American Federation of Labor. Where, in some areas, union labor is crushed and despondent, here there is an electric spirit among the workers, a spirit kept in check by Wildcat Williams, a gunman appointed by the A. F. of L. as international organizer for the Oil Field, Gas Well and Refinery Workers of America.

The desire to organize developed because of the bad strategy of the oil companies. As Judge G. Ed. Warren, president of the State Federation of Labor, expressed it, "The only way I can account for this demand of the oil workers to be chartered is the stupidity of the oil companies. They brought it on themselves, by trying to organize company unions. The companies got scared of the collective bargaining provision in the NRA and thought they'd beat union organizers to it. These men hadn't been talking union until that happened. They were too glad to get a job. But when they saw what the companies were doing, they just got to talking among themselves, organized groups and asked us to charter them."

This spirit spread like a popular fad, but I observed great dissatisfaction in locals because not one of the unions has

done anything for the workers except collect dues and tell them to be patient.

The more I inquired into A. F. of L. activities, the more it seemed to me that this body was actually co-operating with the employer to keep the workers from demanding the end of abuses and improving their conditions. The only function the A. F. of L. serves, as near as I have been able to ascertain, is to keep the workers who are organized from asking too much.

## XI. LOOKING FOR LEADERSHIP

THE American, whether he is the average business man, intellectual, or worker, has been trained to follow the leader. He does not think for himself, and despite the much talked about initiative of individualism, has mighty little initiative. Deeply mired in the old groove, he flounders about helplessly, using more energy trying to proceed along the rut he is in than would be necessary to get on to another path.

This dependence upon leadership for guidance is one of the most pronounced national characteristics, and in this present national emergency, the average American feels that past leadership has somehow failed him. He does not know why. He blames the individual leader instead of the forces that made—and broke—him. He has no conception of the economic forces at work in his own business, in the country, and the world.

The American worker, like workers the world over, is incapable of thinking in abstract terms. He can understand "millionaire" but not "economic system"; "politician" but not "political science." The worker—and by the term "worker" I include even industrialists and bankers—seldom has a view of his own. He accepts a phrase uttered by some prominent person and adopts it as his philosophy; but, since these phrases do not explain or solve his problems, he seethes with a deep resentment which finds expression in the South in bitterness against "millionaires" and throughout the rest of the country against banks, bankers, power trusts, politicians—that entity which hurt him and thus became to him a symbol of oppression.

In his bewilderment, he searches pathetically for some

way out of the mess in which he finds himself, grasping at any straw offered by the changing events. For a time, some of our bright minds thought the tidal wave of overproduction was only a psychological "fear," that it could be stemmed by little Couéistic phrases, such as "Buy Now." The business man sang "Buy Now" till he grew hoarse, but the people—those who do the buying—had no money with which to buy and this bit of modern leadership fell ingloriously.

Other bright leaders thought that the repetition at their Rotarian luncheons that every day in every way things were getting better and better and better would end the depression. So they kept repeating it until so many went bankrupt and others had such hard sledding that there were not enough left who could afford to pay for the luncheons at which they encouraged one another with phrases.

The susceptibility of our people to fall for these absurd suggestions shows an utter failure to understand the economic system under which they do business. Today, the business man is beginning, still somewhat dimly, to understand the relationship between production and consumption—the need of having consumers with money to buy if they are ever going to sell the things produced. The foundation upon which he operated is crumbling under him and everyone is hungry for new leadership, guidance, some way out of the labyrinth, and this yearning is even more pronounced among the workers, who feel that their lot is getting steadily worse.

It is this realization which is forcing them to fight so desperately for unionization, and much of the great unrest throughout the country is due to the failure of conservative leadership to help them achieve their aims. The present A. F. of L. leadership is failing the workers everywhere I have been, and the more A. F. of L. organizers I met, the more amazed I was that labor ever made any progress. The average run of employer is not especially bright about what is going on in the industrial world, but A. F. of L. leaders



are a step or two or perhaps several flights of stairs below the employer in intelligence. Only the massed strength of the workers, despite their leadership, could possibly have extorted the concessions that have been won from employers. Labor in the United States would today be virtually in control of everything had it had any sort of competent leadership. Wherever I found competent leadership—at least men who knew the industry and the workers they were organizing—there I found powerful unions, capable of dealing with their problems.

I have often wondered why an industry like steel was not organized, since the desire of steel workers for organization is quite obvious; but after talking with some of the A. F. of L. organizers, I understand. In Youngstown, for instance, I went from public official to public official asking elementary questions: how many workers are there in the city, in the city's chief industry? They could not tell me.

I went to conservative labor leaders with the same questions; they could not tell me, but suggested that I see Ed. W. Miller, the A. F. of L. resident organizer for all branches of labor. I found Mr. Miller in the Carpenters Headquarters, a thin, scrawny man with a drawn face, watery eyes, and a pale, scared little mustache quivering on his upper lip. He peered at me through gold-rimmed spectacles as he puffed at a corn-cob pipe. In response to my questions, he fished out an old blue-lined book and studied it very carefully in his search for the number of steel workers in Youngstown.

Finally he said:

"You know the steel industry is in a hell of a fix."

"So I have heard. But how many workers are there in the industry here?"

He examined the book some more and then said:

"It's hard to tell. You take this union here"—he pointed a thin finger at a faint pencil scrawl—"Federal Union No.

18,288. That's affiliated with the A. F. of L. Now, the machinists have an organization of their own in this plant."

"How many steel workers are there in Youngstown?" I asked again.

"Well, there are about 12,000 organized."

"How many unorganized?"

"That's hard to tell," he said with a puzzled air.

"How many are out of work?"

He shrugged his shoulders. "Oh, Jesus," he said, "must be about 12,000——"

"Isn't there some place where I can find out how many steel workers there are in Youngstown?"

"Well, we have a central body called the United Labor Congress. Different unions belong to that."

"Would they know?"

"I don't think so."

"Can you tell me who would know?"

"I don't know. Maybe the building-trades secretary could tell you something."

"About the steel workers?"

"No, I have all the information about steel workers."

"Can you tell me if there has been an increase in the number of workers the steel mills have put to work?"

He thought carefully again.

"That's hard to tell."

"Just what is your function here?"

"I'm resident A. F. of L. organizer for steel and all other branches."

"Just what do you do?"

"When they call a meeting, I help them organize."

"Well, haven't you any idea about conditions in the steel industry, the number of workers, the number employed, the number unemployed, the number working on a stagger system?"

"Oh," he said, "lots of mills have the stagger system."

"How about the speed-up?"

"Oh, they got the speed-up, too. They've been complaining about the speed-up for years."

"Well, look, suppose there's work for 10,000 men and the mills decide to stagger the work by putting on another 10,000 men and giving each group half time. This would actually reduce wages for the original 10,000, wouldn't it? And the government's figures showing increased employment in the steel industry wouldn't mean anything so far as the total payroll is concerned?"

"It would seem that way," he said cautiously.

"Well, what I'd like to know is, how many steel workers have been put to work on the stagger system which actually reduced the income of the original workers."

"Oh," he said, "that would be hard to tell. But maybe John Conroy over there could help you." He pointed to an elderly man slouched in a chair before a rolltop desk near the door.

"Who is he?"

"He's the secretary of a lot of lodges affiliated with the Amalgamated Association of Iron, Steel and Tin Workers of North America. It's an organization which has been in existence for 50 years," he said proudly.

Mr. Conroy stared at me from under a battered hat, spat a mouthful of tobacco juice into a spittoon at his feet, and shook his head when I asked how many steel workers there were in Youngstown.

"I don't know," he said.

"Just what is your official position?"

"I'm recording secretary of Fairview Lodge No. 401, a local of the Amalgamated."

"Have you been at this job long?"

"Oh, I've been a union man and organizer pretty near 30 years." He chuckled a little and added, "We pay a per

capita tax to the A. F. of L., but I never saw an A. F. of L. man in this lodge for the thirty years I've been here."

"Well, can you tell me how many steel workers there are in Youngstown?"

He shook his head again.

"I heard somebody say yesterday that there must be about 15,000 or 20,000. But maybe what he had in mind was the number out of work."

He slouched a little more in his chair.

"Can you tell me how many steel workers are unemployed in Youngstown?"

He thought carefully for a while and then smiled benignly.

"There was a time when there wasn't a man working. I can remember that. But things are a lot better now."

"Can you give me an idea of how many steel workers are organized?"

He looked up at me irritably.

"Say, what do you think I am," he exclaimed, "a book of statistics?"

"I'm sorry," I apologized, "Mr. Miller said you were a student——"

Mr. Conroy brightened.

"Well, I'm a student of all kinds of things. Some people loaf in the pool rooms but I do my loafing in the public library. And you know, when a feller does that, he sort of misses things like wages and workers."

"Looks like it," I agreed.

"Would you want to know what caused the depression?" he asked suddenly. "I can tell you."

"Well, we'll get to that later. Can you tell me if there's any difficulty in organizing steel workers now?"

"They have a sort of company union in some of the plants," he said thoughtfully. "But I think it's a fake union. The men got no one to appeal to. But we got officers. We got a Constitution—a real Constitution," he added.



I looked around helplessly and Mr. Conroy suddenly said: "He used to drink twenty-five drinks a day—before prohibition."

"Who?" I asked, startled.

"Why, I told you."

"So you did. I'm sorry."

I still wonder who used to drink twenty-five drinks a day before prohibition, but I don't wonder any longer why the steel workers are seething with unrest and threatening to take things in their own hands without the benefit, advice, aid, or guidance of their "leaders."

Workers as well as business men feel that politics play an important part in their struggle for a livelihood, and in their present condition they turn to new political parties or switch from their old allegiances. In the South, this hunger for someone who expresses what they want is seen in the development of Huey Long's power. In the mid-West we find farmer-labor politicians who try to straddle the fence between the opposing interests of the workers and the employer. The line-up between the two opposing sides will become clearer as the depression deepens, but before that does, new types of political parties, and leaders who apparently offer a solution to both workers and employers, will arise. This is inevitable, in view of the failure of both the Democratic and Republican parties to cope with the problems brought on by the depression. These new parties and new leadership will produce incongruities inherent in their composition, as can be seen by the political situation in Hibbing, Minn.

There, it all started when the small property owner got a little tired of being kicked around by the two ruling political parties. The struggles between the two parties, or rather the score of men who controlled the parties, kept the workers beautifully divided. None of them thought very much of organizing themselves. When the depression came and the

mines shut down completely, there were so many out of work and the limited relief had to be distributed so thinly that many miners went hungry and the small business men couldn't take in enough to cover their overhead. The companies insisted that they could not pay the capital tax levied against them, a tax which brought in 99 per cent of the village's income. The political leaders reduced the tax. With Hibbing's income drastically out, there was still less for the unemployed, who grew restless and threatening.

Into this irritable atmosphere came the revelation of an old American custom. A school house had been built with a great fanfare of virtuous speeches about educating the children. The bill for the school was seven million dollars, with everybody but the political leaders feeling that it could have been built for two million. This was a little too much for the workers starving on the iron range. The CWA came along just in time to give them something to do and money to buy food, and the mounting anger was dissipated.

The two political organizations maintained their tight control. Those who were sick of the graft and corruption did not dare oppose them by starting a rival party, though everyone seemed to want one. If you were a worker and talked of opposition you found it difficult not only to get a job but even relief, and if you were a business man, pressure was brought to bear on your customers in a dozen different ways until you wished you had never started messing around with politics.

History, however, says that events produce their own great men and, sure enough, history didn't fall short in this case. Two linotype operators working for the Hibbing *Tribune*, Arthur B. Timmerman and his brother Ben, good union men, started meditating on the town's troubles. Two years ago they ran a labor candidate. They weren't fired then, because neither the paper nor the politicians worried about it. They knew that what little there was of organized labor

would not risk good jobs to vote for the labor candidate, and the politicians, the paper, and the iron-ore companies were right.

When the votes had been counted Arthur and Ben sat around kind of sadly in the back room of the same saloon where I subsequently sat with them. Clarence Smith, 26-year-old reporter on the Hibbing *Tribune*, dropped in.

"You know what's the matter with this town," said Clarence. "The people are afraid to vote against the ruling parties."

"You're darn tootin'," said the Timmerman brothers.

"What we ought to do is organize them secretly, so that no one's name will come out; then they'll feel they're not alone when they go to vote," suggested the reporter.

And with that was born the idea of the secret units which actually captured Hibbing and spread like wildfire through the whole Mesaba range.

The secret-unit idea is really simple. Half a dozen trusted and intimate friends met in Ben's house. Each was appointed a unit commander; that is, it was his job to line up two other men, sworn to secrecy, since their own jobs depended on it. These two men were each to line up two, and these four two each, and so on until there were thirty-two men in the secret unit. No one but the commander was to know the names of all the members. No names were to be used at any time in the matter of the very small dues. Each unit was given a letter of the alphabet and each member in the unit a number and they were so recorded.

The idea of being very secret and meeting at midnight in some home or barn or chicken coop thrilled the citizens of Hibbing, who were rather bored with their humdrum existence anyway, and this feeling of being conspirators contributed a great deal to the very rapid development of the units. Only men were accepted, it being understood that the women would vote with their men anyway. The member-



ship consisted chiefly of small business men and property-owners who were eager to do away with the graft-ridden parties.

When the 1933 election came along, the secret units named Arthur B. Timmerman for mayor as labor's choice, and his paper and the established political parties laughed again. And so well had the secret units been organized that though their existence had leaked out, the ruling parties did not even suspect their strength. When the election was over, Arthur B. Timmerman, thirty-five-year-old linotype operator, was mayor.

And from then on Arthur's troubles began.

First, he dispensed patronage to keep his units from being dissatisfied, for, as the mayor explained it to me in his office one secret Sunday afternoon, "patronage is the life of a political party." Second, he announced that his was to be a labor government. Shortly after this announcement, the iron-ore companies very suavely said that the \$65 per capita tax which they were paying was too much and that it would have to be lowered or they would take the matter into the courts. The mayor and the Brain Trust back of him did not worry, for the people were with them.

"The important thing to me, Mr. Mayor," I said, "is that this is an announced labor government. You are having difficulty feeding the unemployed miners. What will happen under your regime if you don't feed them?"

"Trouble," he said frankly. "Maybe riots. I can see it coming here within a year."

"What will be your position?"

"My sympathies are with the laboring man."

"I know. But you are faced with a peculiar situation. Your sympathies are with the workers. You are a labor government. Yet, you have sworn to uphold and defend property and small property-owners make up most of your member-



ship. What will you do when the workers demand food, even to the extent of taking it forcibly?"

He shook his head with a worried air.

"I don't know."

"Will you order the police to shoot into them?"

He stared at his brother and then out of the window. Finally he shook his head.

"I'm going to try to straighten it out, if possible, but if it gets to the stage where the workers insist upon taking things, I think I'll tell the police to lose themselves somewhere."

"But what happens to your oath to protect property?"

"I don't know," he said a little forlornly. "But I'm not going to give orders to shoot down workers. I know if I were hungry, I'd take a brick and smash a window and let them give me thirty days and feed me while I'm in jail."

"But that doesn't answer the question. If you permit the police to let them take food, then you lose the support of the small storekeepers and property-owners and consequently your political control; and if you order the police to stop the workers you are no longer for them and lose their support. So which side are you on?"

"Say," he said, rubbing his head, "I've got an awful headache."

I gave him two aspirin tablets, and his brother, who was present at the interview, got him a glass of water. After he swallowed the tablets, he said: "You know this whole unit scheme was started to overthrow the local graft-ridden machine. It wasn't intended to cope with all these problems. Look here, why don't you see Clarence Smith tomorrow? I've got to leave for Duluth. I'm willing to be quoted for anything he says."

The next day when Smith, Ben, and I were seated comfortably in the back room of the saloon, they were curious about what I had learned since my arrival in town.

"I've been talking to miners all morning," I said cheerfully, "and in the City Hall, where you gave the CWA a room in which to organize, I talked to about thirty or forty of them. They said plainly that if they do not get sufficient food for themselves and their families pretty soon, they intend to take it by force. Now what will you do in that case?"

"Jesus," said Ben, "I've been thinking about that all night. Must we start on it all over again?"

"You're going to face it sooner or later; we might as well get the answer."

Ben gulped his drink and looked long and thoughtfully at the melting ice in the glass. Clarence finished his beer and drew nervous lines on the table top. Finally Ben sighed and gave his decision.

"That's a sticker," he said.

"But that's not an answer," I persisted. "You are supposed to be a labor government. That's for the workers. On the other hand, you are sworn to uphold property rights. That's the capitalist government. If you defend property rights, you lose the support of the workers, and if you feed the workers, you lose the support of the property-owners. Right?"

"Right."

"And if you lose either one, you lose your political organization. Right?"

"Right," they said disconsolately.

"So what's the answer?"

"I don't know," said Ben.

"Yeah," said Clarence, "That's a mess."

They thought for the space of a beer and a highball, and then Clarence borrowed a pencil from me.

"Look," he said worriedly, "the iron companies have a per capita tax at the present time of \$65 for every resident of Hibbing. We have over 15,000 people living here. The tax was reduced by the political party in power before we got in.

If we raise it back to \$70 that would bring us in, let's see, about a million dollars. With other tax sources it would be about a million and a half. Now, if we raise that per capita tax to \$100, which is what the companies used to pay, that would bring us a million and a half from that alone and with the other incomes we would have enough to feed the unemployed. That's your answer."

"Not quite," I cautioned. "In the first place, the iron-ore companies are already insisting the \$65 per capita tax is too much. They want it reduced. They threaten not to pay the second half of the tax this year unless it is reduced. They pay about 99 per cent of your income. If they refuse to pay, where will you get money to run the town, pay the officials' salaries, and thus keep your patronage in line, as well as feed the unemployed?"

"That's a sticker," said Ben Timmerman sadly.

"Sticker?" sighed Clarence. "That's a headache."

"The companies can start litigation, keep it in the courts for several years, and in the meantime, where do you get money to run the town?"

"That's more headache," said Ben, rapping for another highball.

We drank quietly for a while. Finally, Clarence said:

"Look here, we have a friendly governor. If the companies start litigation and won't give us a cent to pay salaries and feed the unemployed for whom they are responsible anyway, because they brought them here in the first place, then the governor can prohibit moving any ore out of the state."

"So what? Assuming the governor does that—which of course he can be stopped from doing by an injunction—how will that bring you in taxes to run the village? While all this is going on, the workers get restless and take food. And where are you then?"

"Jesus," said Ben Timmerman, "haven't you any cheerful questions?"

"So your organization is busted up either way and the other parties get control again. And when that happens, you can bank on it they won't let you fellows stick around this town and work against their control. So where are you?"

"So we take the first freight out," said the secretary of the new political party. "We know if we get licked we couldn't get a job in this town; we'll be out in the cold."

"That's right," I agreed sympathetically. "You'll be out in the cold, especially you and the mayor and all the leaders."

"What do you suggest?" they asked anxiously.

"I'm not suggesting. I'm trying to find out what you fellows are going to do. You can't straddle the fence. Either you are entirely with the workers or entirely with the companies. You can't have a half-and-half government any more in these days."

"Looks like it sure," said Ben Timmerman, shaking his head sadly.

"And a workers' government means Communism."

"No, not that!" Ben said, almost hysterically.

"If things get very bad and the workers revolt, then you'll have to give them free reign or use force to keep them down. And that will be the beginning of a dictatorship—fascism."

"That would be better than Communism," said Clarence, with a momentary hopeful gleam in his eye.

"Yeah," said Ben, "then we confiscate food and feed the workers."

"If you're in favor of a dictatorship, then all this voting stuff and democracy is a lot of hooey. So what happens to your Fourth of July speeches?"

"Jesus," said Ben, rubbing his hand through his hair.

"I've got a headache and it's not the beer," said Clarence.

"You got a headache," said the secret-unit secretary.

"Think of me!"

"We got to make up our minds," said Ben.

"Yeah, that's it," said Clarence. "Of course, we saw all



these things you bring up, but we've been so busy with day-to-day things we've had no time to think about them. You know it takes time to think about these things."

They promised to write and let me know how they intend to solve the problem of being a workers' and a capitalists' government at the same time. I'm still waiting for the answer.

## XII. "WE'RE GOING TO EAT!"

I SAT on a wooden bench in the CWA building in New Orleans beside a man waiting to be interviewed before his plea for any kind of work was passed upon. At first he thought I was there for a job too, for he eyed my topcoat carefully and said:

"You'll never get a job with that coat on you. Better hock it; then maybe they'll give you something to do. Mine went long ago."

"How long have you been out of a job?"

"A little over a year. Things been getting worse all the time. I had some money saved but that went months ago." He smiled wistfully and added: "I used to get \$75 a week, but that was long ago."

"What was your business?"

"Real estate." He grinned. It was the first sign of amusement that showed on his worried face. "Now look at me."

"Haven't things picked up any since the government came in here?"

"Not much. Whatever improvements there have been are mostly of a seasonal nature."

"What does it cost you to live here?"

"Nothing. I have nothing. I've hocked everything I ever had after we drew out the money I had saved up. We had it in two banks. From one of them I got thirty cents on the dollar and from the other nothing. That went long ago. Our food—I have a wife and two children—comes from the organizations."

"The government's firing men, not hiring them," I said.

He nodded glumly. "I know, but some are getting relief jobs. I've got to get a job. This relief is not enough for us."

"What'll you do if you can't get a job?"

He stared at the information desk visible in the corridor from where we sat. He shook his head slowly.

"Just live on charity, I guess."

"All charity money is now coming from the government. And that can't keep up indefinitely."

"It better keep up—somehow, someway," he said slowly. "I'm a good American and I've always been honest and law-abiding, but——"

He did not finish, just sat there with his shoulders hunched, staring at the information desk.

I asked Julius Goldman, director of the New Orleans Community Chest which distributed food to the hungry, about the temper of the people before government aid came.

"It was bad," he said seriously. "It needed just one strong man to lead them and there would have been a full-sized rebellion. But they have no leadership."

"What do you think will happen if the government stops giving relief?"

"I don't see how it can. The government will do something to keep the unemployed going."

"And if not?"

"I don't want to be quoted about killings. But these people will eat. I know if my family were hungry they'd eat."

In Charlotte I asked unemployed mill workers:

"What will you do if government relief is cut to the bone or stops altogether?"

"I wish we knew," said one.

"I guess the Salvation Army will pick up where they left off," said another.

"Wages will come down," said a third brightly.

"They'd get some more, some way," another said confidently. "Roosevelt ain't going to let us starve."

"Half of us would perish."

"We'd go back to the farm."

"But suppose you have nothing to live on while you work the farm or the government does not find some way to keep the money flowing?"

"If it comes to that," one old man said slowly, "I'm tellin' you I'm going to eat and so are my children. There's some way we got to find—even if we have to steal."

All of their answers were individualistic. They would fight for their families—even if they had to steal. That was the extent to which they would go. There was not the slightest thought of organized action.

Among the Negroes I found a simple determination to survive.

"I've got a right to eat an' so's my family," one Negro said to me. "I ain't goin' to starve. No, sir. I'm willin' to work—work hard, too, but I ain't goin' to starve."

He emphasized it with a determined nod of his head.

"What'll you do?" I asked.

"I don't know what I'll do, sir, but I ain't goin' to starve."

And in the wastes of the Mesaba iron range in Minnesota, I asked unemployed miners what their reaction would be if the government stopped pouring money into the area for relief.

"We'll have to do it if the government can't."

"Go to the poor farm," said another slowly.

"I don't know where the government's going to get its money and I don't care," said a third. "But we're going to eat. We'd like to get it peacefully, if possible"—he paused and added slowly—"but we'll get it otherwise if necessary."

There were nine or ten miners in one group I talked with when one of them expressed similar sentiments. I asked them:

"Is what he is saying your sentiments or is he merely expressing his own views?"



For a moment they hesitated.

“It’s the sentiment around here,” one middle-aged miner finally said.

“Sounds a bit like a Communist,” I laughed.

They thought that over carefully.

“Well, we’re all in the same boat,” one miner who had kept quiet during the conversation said slowly. “We’re all hard up. And if taking things by force if necessary sounds like a Communist, well—then it just sounds like a Communist.”

“If things don’t pick up,” another miner interrupted, “you’ll see a lot of things up here that will surprise the whole country. We’re about tired of waiting and starving and seeing our children starve. Communism or no Communism, we’ve all got to live some way. There’s too much money in this country for any of us to have to go hungry. But we’ll wait a little longer and see what the government does.”

The “labor administration” elected in the hope that politics will somehow show them the way out of the depression set aside an office on an upper floor in the Hibbing City Hall for the unemployed miners and other local workers to organize a protective alliance. The office corridor and stairway were crowded with lines of unemployed eager to organize, hopeful that through a united demand they might persuade the government to give them a little more relief. There were men of all ages and nationalities in the crowd, grim-faced, harassed, worried-looking men who eyed me suspiciously. They fear strangers as well as one another, for the iron range is notorious for its labor spy system.

William Hodge, treasurer of the newly organized protective group, and his girl secretary were busy passing out cards for the unemployed to fill. It was from Hodge and the other miners that I got the story of their desperate struggle for bread which is threatening grave disturbances.

The mine's season for work is about half a year, due to inability to ship ore on Lake Superior during the winter months. Since the depression, most of the miners have not worked at all or worked only a couple of months. During his working period, the miner earns an average of about \$5 a day if the conditions are very favorable.

"That's when there is mining—which there hasn't been for years. And the best we get is half a year's pay if we work steady. But we got to eat for a whole year," one miner explained.

"What are your living expenses?" I asked.

"You can't get by with less than fifteen dollars a week," several said immediately.

"That ain't enough," others interposed. "You can't get along on less than twenty dollars if you pay rent and water and light."

"That depends on the size of the family," said one judiciously, "but if you got a regular-sized family with maybe two or three kids you can't get by with less than twenty dollars a week."

"Did any of you ever make a living?" I asked.

"We got by in 1929—if we worked a whole season. But there's nobody making a living now the way they got them mines."

They repeated the story I heard everywhere, the old familiar one of wage cuts before the NRA, of total unemployment, more wage cuts after the NRA, charity, degradation, poverty, restlessness. Here, in this small mining village, was the United States.

"How did you men feel about all this?" I asked.

"Well, we didn't feel right," several said with smiles.

"What steps did you take to eat? Were you organized at that time?"

The question of organization brought loud, bitter laughs.

"There ain't never been any organization out on the

range,” everyone agreed. “The companies got a spy system so that you can’t trust nobody. The minute anybody tried to organize or even talked of a union he was fired and blacklisted.”

“So what did you do?”

“Most of us did nothing; but a lot of us just did things by themselves,” said several miners. “Some of us went looking in garbage cans for something to eat——”

“A lot of robberies broke out,” explained Hodge. “Food warehouses, stores, coal cars—no place was safe from robbery. Miners who had never taken a penny from anyone were breaking into stores and warehouses, stealing food, and coal from the cars to keep their houses warm. I tell you it began to look pretty serious and nobody blamed those who were doing the stealing.”

“Was there any organized demand for relief?”

“There were some protest meetings,” said Hodge, “but it was because those with a little political influence were getting steady work from the village and regular food allowances while the average worker was just left to starve. But just about then the CWA came along.”

“That about saved everybody from robbing each other, eh?”

“Just about,” they agreed grimly.

“And now that the CWA has been dropped?”

“You can see for yourself,” Hodge nodded toward the jammed office and corridor. “We’re organizing and we intend to protect ourselves. The government and the state’s promised us that the unemployed would get jobs or eat, and we intend to see to it that they do, and we’re not going to do it singly. We’re going to do it in a body.”

“What will you do if they are not put to work?”

“First we’ll show them our strength by mass demonstrations, mass meetings. And if these warnings have no results——”

He paused and shook his head.

"God knows what we'll do after that. But you can bet on one thing. As long as I'm living in this town, I'm not going to starve."

"That's about right," said a husky miner standing near the wall.

"Going radical?"

"Radicalism comes after starvation," said a clean-cut miner sitting on a chair near the secretary.

"We're going to try to get everything in a peaceful way," said Hodge.

"In some places the unemployed tried to get something peacefully and some were killed. Suppose you get that here?"

Everybody laughed.

"We can face that if necessary," said a middle-aged man, with a drooping mustache.

"We can try a little Irish confetti," said one grimly.

"Listen, mister," a miner, in a crowd near the door, broke out, pushing his way nearer to the desk at which I sat taking notes of our conversation, "what we mean is that we're all past the state of kidding."

"That's right," several men murmured.

"If something don't turn up here and turn up damn fast, we're going to start action. You can put that in your book if you're a writer, or if you're from the government trying to find out how we feel you can tell that to the President and if you're from the companies you can tell it to them! We don't give a damn who you tell it to, but we're through kidding. We're going to eat, and either they give us food or we take it. That's final."

"That's just about right," a heavy-set miner said quietly. There was a murmur of approval from the crowd.

"Aren't you getting any help from your local political administration? It's supposed to be a labor government, isn't it?"



“Yes, it’s supposed to be,” several miners said dryly.

“Well, this is supposed to be a labor government and at the same time it is supposed to defend property rights. What will happen when you decide to take something to eat? This labor government will have to order out the police to disperse you and protect property rights.”

“Then we’ll take the police with us, too,” said one with a grin.

“Nothing’s impossible,” added another.

“And if they won’t come and we find it necessary, then we’ll take the police, too, if they try to stop us,” added a third. “And if we have to, we’ll do it.”

“That’s just about right,” said another miner.

No one disagreed with him.

### XIII. ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE GOVERNMENT

THE people have two distinct attitudes towards the government, attitudes resulting from class interests. Each class wants the government to safeguard its own particular interests, and resentment against the government is based on its failure to grant either the working or the employing class what it wishes.

These main class divisions subdivide themselves. The needs of the big industrialist are different from the needs of the small manufacturer; and these subdivisions are further subdivided by group interests. The interests of the shoe manufacturer are different from those of the steel baron, and each is particularly interested in his own class and group.

Among the workers there is first the class interest, which in most cases they do not perceive as such, and secondly, the group interest, because the needs of the worker in the mine are different from those of the farm laborers.

Both classes consider the government as a third factor to be used for their own purposes. Since the government functions essentially to protect property rights, the employing class is usually victorious in getting the government to accede to its wishes. Whatever the workers have gotten has been in the nature of concessions from the government.

I found the American worker essentially a quiet person imbued with the belief that he is as good as King George, President Roosevelt, Rockefeller, and his immediate boss. The only difference, he feels, is that they have money and power which he, too, vaguely hopes to achieve; especially

is this true of the small business man and the white-collar worker.

Essentially, the American is patriotic. Even those who have picked up rifles to take food forcibly do not realize that it is an act against the government; to them, it is merely getting something which the government failed to supply. To them, the seizure of food supplies in violation of the government's efforts to protect property, implies no loss of their ingrained patriotism.

The people's attitude towards the government varies according to the area. The industrial worker in a Southern textile city has one, while the industrial worker in a New England shoe center which has been unionized for more than a quarter of a century, has another, and the unorganized worker in a Toledo or Detroit shop, still another. The attitudes vary according to habits, leadership, and immediate economic needs. In the agricultural areas, I found distinct differences in attitudes which depended not only upon these factors but also upon background and environment. The poor farmer in the South who has always been oppressed while taught that this is his government, still feels that he is a citizen of the greatest country in the world, even though his right to do something about the way his country is being run was taken away from him because he did not have two dollars to pay a poll tax. In other areas where he feels that he is being walked on, he develops a high sense of militancy, as among the Negro share-croppers in Alabama, where organizational work has reached a high degree of success, and in Mississippi and Louisiana, where Huey Long's demagogic appeals have found sympathetic ears.

In the more free and independent background of the Midwest, where the farmers for decades listened to vote-hunting politicians tell them they were the backbone of the country, they have come to believe it and are consequently

showing their teeth when the government fails to accede to their demands.

In most industrial areas, the workers are at sea. They know only that a beneficial government kept them from starving, and they are grateful. Most of them are convinced that the government is deeply interested in their welfare, that it is really a government "for the people." In some regions, now that they know the government can feed them, they are perfectly content to let the government worry about their continued existence.

But in the deep South there is another picture.

Destitution has reached such depths there that almost anything seems preferable to present conditions. The croppers and independent farmers have no faith in the promises of politicians and officials. They have a deep conviction that the politician whom they themselves elect functions solely for the benefit of the rich.

The question naturally arises why they keep re-electing them. I don't know. I asked this question of many farmers who were particularly incensed against politicians, and the gist of their replies was that there is no one else to vote for except Republicans, and these are generally disliked. To this may be added that not everyone is permitted to vote. The Negro is automatically disfranchised almost everywhere in the South, and the poor white might just as well be black so far as his vote is concerned. He is disfranchised because he is poor. If he cannot pay the poll tax he cannot vote. Since most croppers and their families live on allowances ranging from \$9 to \$21 for the months of March to August inclusive, and end the season in debt, they simply cannot raise the dollar or two needed to pay the poll tax and thus enjoy the privilege of the ballot. These disfranchised citizens look with particular distrust upon politicians.

The farmer who is able to pay the poll tax is a member of the voting aristocracy. It is he who gets whatever favors



politicians have to disburse. He gets preference in charity and in government work. Government funds are distributed by local officials and the distributions are made primarily to bolster their political control and only secondarily to help the needy. So far as I have been able to observe, government relief funds have simply enabled local politicians to strengthen their own political machine at government expense.

To the cropper is now added the farmer who lost his land because he was unable to meet taxes ranging from \$20 to \$100. Former small landowners see the local bank acquiring large areas of land; they see new foundations of wealth being laid by local storekeepers who, with relief money spent in their stores, buy up the farms auctioned off for taxes. As near as I can see the "dry-goods-and-notions" man will be the landed aristocracy in the near future if this process continues. Once in possession of the land, the government pays him a bonus not to plow a portion of it; and for plowable acres, his croppers do the work and are fed by the government, while the new owner receives half of the entire crop. And all this, perhaps, in return for paying \$20 in delinquent taxes for a farm.

In Lincoln County, Miss., only 2,000 of the 2,500 individually owned farms actually plowed under part of their crops. Some 500 farmers refused to sign with the government, grew as much as possible, and cashed in on the rise in prices. Others agreed to plow under, collected the government curtailment bonus, but baled a full crop and hid the bales against a rise in price.

This tendency to "work" the government for as much as possible is obvious everywhere. I haven't tried to find out why, but I imagine I would not be far wrong if I guessed that the farmers merely want to do what the "millionaires" do. They see it done on every side, by the rich and by the politician, and they want to get in under the golden shower.

At first, when the government made contracts with the farmers, "half-hands," as the croppers are called, the neediest class of all, got nothing. Now, having realized that the cropper cannot even pay the poll tax which entitled him to vote and is therefore a complete loss as a political factor, the government eliminated the "half-hand" in contracts—and it must be remembered that "half-hands" comprise approximately half the population. The neediest of all farmers thus receive no benefit whatever from the government splurge in millions. Croppers are not only no better off but, due to restricted plowing, actually much worse off, and what they are thinking about the government as a result may easily be imagined.

At the other end of the continent, in Longview, Wash., there is still another attitude.

There were some five or six men with Roger A. Jones, secretary of the Loggers and Sawmill Workers Union, an A. F. of L. affiliate, when I tried to get from him an idea of what the lumbermen wanted, and the answers I got from this group were the answers I got from other lumber and sawmill workers.

"Our main object is the recognition of our union so that we can bargain collectively for what we want," they all agreed. "We do not ask for too much, but we want a fair share of the profits of the companies. Some of our other requirements are comparatively small, and which we can get through collective bargaining, such as better safety regulations, proper hospitalization, better working hours."

With most of them living on a starvation level, they read about the profits the companies are making; how the NRA, which brought wage cuts and speed-up for them, turned out so nicely for the companies. They feel that since they did the work which produced these profits they are entitled to a slightly higher wage scale than they are getting—which they call a share in the profits.

This attitude of a demand for a "share in the profits" is pronounced in organized areas or areas which had once been organized and knew the power of collective bargaining; and the efforts of capital to prevent them from getting it is but one more instance of capital's failure to see further than its nose, for with the refusal to grant a trifling share of the profits, capital is solidifying the ranks of the workers. The lumbermen are slowly coming to realize that they themselves are the producers of profit, and it is only a step further to the inevitable conclusion that they run the industry and—well, confiscation of property has been, and can again be, undertaken by the government.

The worker rarely thinks in terms of confiscation or government operation of an industry unless forced to it by the refusal of an industry to consider his welfare. As a rule, the American worker is loyal to the company he works for. He has swallowed the oft-repeated statements that capital and labor are friends. He is a reasonable person and when he knows there is a depression and the company has to lay off men or reduce wages, he accepts his hard luck uncomplainingly, feeling that it is not the company's fault. When he returns to work, all he asks for is a decent living wage.

But capital always wants to get as much work and pay as little for it as possible, and this short-sightedness is destroying the legend of capital and labor being bosom cronies. By destroying this legend capital is actually driving the workers to organize and develop the very strength which will one day destroy it. Already, workers in some sections of the country, as in the Northwest lumber region, who cannot get relief either from the companies or from the government, are talking of taking over and running the industry themselves.

In the cattle region, there is a widespread feeling that the government is merely a resting place for incompetents.

The old individualism which ruined not only cattle-

growers but the country at large is still in evidence. Many cattle-growers feel that the government is meddling in their business too much, and a good deal of this feeling is due to the conviction that the government consists of a lot of fools.

"Just a lot of idiots down there in Washington," one rangy cattleman swore when I talked with him. "Some politician or friend of a friend of the politician who can't make a living on his own gets a government job and in the course of the years he learns something—let's say Nebraska farming. He goes out there, tells the farmers what to do and sometimes actually helps them. When he knows all about wheat, that makes him a government authority on cattle so the government sends him out here to tell us what to do, and his ideas are crazy. Why the hell don't the government send someone out who knows cattle? I've seen a lot of cattle-growers, because they were dazed and didn't know what to do, follow the government's advice and get ruined more thoroughly than by the banks. So whenever a government agent comes out here, we're just plain afraid of him."



## XIV. THE WORKER THINKS

AMONG the workers in the Charlotte industrial area I found a strange sort of complacency. Not one out of every hundred is a foreigner or of foreign descent. Almost all are native white descendants of pioneers who hacked a world out of a wilderness, yet whatever vigor and aggressiveness their ancestors once possessed seems to be gone now.

Throughout my conversations with them, not one displayed a feeling of indignation at their dreadful destitution. There was only a sense of relief that the federal government was distributing a little work and charity. They seemed perfectly willing to lean on the government's shoulder, get what few crumbs were thrown their way, and hope for the best.

I said to a group I talked with:

"What I don't understand is how 100 per cent Americans, whose ancestors settled and cultivated this land, who worked all their lives to build this state, are willing to sit back and take charity which is insufficient to keep one man alive, let alone a whole family."

For the first time, they reacted with a touch of spirit.

"We don't like charity," one said angrily. "We don't want charity. That's why we work for nothing now. When a man needed a worker and the worker asked for fifty cents an hour the man called the Salvation Army which supplied one for fifty cents a day."

His words rolled forth angrily in a steady stream. His eyes flashed and the others nodded their heads.

"They're using charity organizations to supply cheap labor and cut down our wages. They give workers who are

placed by charity organizations \$1.50 a month in cash and the rest in scrip tickets to get food and tell them where to spend it. Hell, we don't want charity. We want work. It's a God-damn shame. There are families here that have been paying taxes for 150 years to the state and now can't get work."

The Negro in the South rarely talks frankly to a white man about his reaction to the white man's attitude towards him. In his own way, the Negro fully realizes his position in the white man's scheme of things, and though he may laugh, as he is so frequently portrayed in the white man's popular fiction, his burning resentment is already taking form in the share-cropper organizations in Alabama and other areas in the deep South. Negroes bow to the white man and agree with him no matter what they really think. They have learned not to express their thoughts too openly.

On a country road in Mississippi, I got to talking with a group of Negroes burning the stubble of last year's growth before plowing for the new crop. I asked them if they had benefited by the government contracts for restricted plowing. One Negro laughed and asked if he could sing me a song. I urged him to go ahead.

It was about a white man talking to his colored cropper after the former had signed a contract with the government, and two lines tell the whole story:

"Accordin' to the contract I has signed  
You gits the seed an' the cotton is mine."

"Are things any better now that the government is spending money down here?"

"Sho'. But we ain't gettin' none of it," another grinned.

"What do you get?"

"Nothin'. Ain't never got nothin'."

"Did you ever get anything?"

"Sho'. Us tenant farmers used to get advances. Now we

got to go to the Red Cross. Cap'n says he can't afford to feed us. He says we ought to be satisfied we got a place to sleep."

"Looks like you're worse off than before the depression, doesn't it?"

"Cap'n, niggers allus had old man Depression!"

"Only now he done brought his whole family!" one of the group added cheerfully.

The white man throughout the country does not have to hide his feelings and many express themselves simply and to the point. Most of them have vague ideas that somehow through organization they can improve their conditions, but the kind of organization means much to them for, despite the bludgeonings of events, their early patriotic training still has a strong hold on them. Not only are they patriotic, but they fear the words "red" and "communist," and this fear influences their views.

For instance, Northwest lumbermen with whom I talked have a friendly feeling toward the old I.W.W., many having been members of the organization and many others having friends who had been members.

"Destroying property never did anyone any good," one tall, wiry lumberman told me thoughtfully. "The old I.W.W.'s were a fine organization. They never did half the damage that was laid to them, but I don't belong to them and never did. I'm an A. F. of L. man—a good clean American organization."

"Is the A. F. of L. doing anything for you?"

His eyes clouded and he shook his head slightly.

"Of course, we've just begun to organize so it ain't fair to say they ain't done nothing as yet."

"Suppose they don't after you've organized?"

"Well, if they don't do anything, we will. We won't go radical. You can depend upon that. We won't have nothing to do with the Communists."

"What's the matter with them?"

"They ought to be chased out of the country," he said hotly. "We don't want them here. I got no use for them. Did you ever attend one of their meetings? Christ! All they talk about is overthrowing the government. It's a secret organization with murder in the background. Why, you know, they hold their meetings and decide to bump somebody off. So they take a vote on it and one of the papers picked out of the hat has a black ball on it and the one who gets the black ball has to go and bump off the guy that's been marked. Now, if I belonged to an organization like that and got the black ball I wouldn't like to go and bump nobody off, so I wouldn't have nothin' to do with them."

In the Mesaba iron range, unemployed and hungry ore-miners have the general view of the American worker so far as Communism is concerned.

"We don't believe in it," a miner told me. "We just believe in getting an equal share of the right to live in this country—and if we don't get it, we'll take it."

"You're not getting it now; what I want to know is how you fellows think it can be done. What do you suggest?"

"My idea is that either the companies work these mines and give us a chance to make a living or give the mines to the government to run," said one miner.

"But wouldn't that be socializing industry?" I asked.

They thought that over carefully, obviously still fearful of the word "socializing." Finally the miner said with a shake of his head:

"That's the only thing I can see to do. At least until business picks up."

"Suppose the government took over the mines. How much profit would you allow the companies?"

"That's a hard question to answer," he said thoughtfully. "I'd say give the companies half and give the government half after all wages are paid."



When they cannot reason themselves out of a situation they turn their resentment, like a child who stubs his toe on a stone and kicks it, against the immediate thing which hurt them. In the course of asking unemployed miners what they thought was the solution to the depression, the answers closely resembled those I heard in other areas where the mechanization of industry threw people out of work.

"What do we think?" one miner said. "There's no need of conditions being what they are. The only solution is to increase the wages and shorten the working day so that everybody will have work and enough to eat."

"Cut down big machinery," said another. "That's what's killing everything. Big machinery is throwing more and more people out of work."

They started a hot discussion among themselves about the advantages or disadvantages of improved machinery in industry. They were about evenly divided in their opinions, but obviously the views they held had been picked up from the press or speeches of some prominent individual. Neither group was able to offer sound reasons for their beliefs.

"You used to have fourteen men to the shovel; now you got two," one miner said triumphantly. "Big machinery threw these twelve men out of work and they can never get jobs now."

"Cut down the working hours," another miner insisted, "and get the wages up and big machinery will be a help to everybody."

"That's no good. That will never work. They'll make still bigger machinery and the bigger they make 'em the more men there'll be out of work."

Essentially all that the American worker wants is a job and a wage sufficient to keep himself and his family in fairly comfortable circumstances. He is perfectly willing to let capital run business and the country so long as he works, eats, and votes occasionally, and if the worse comes to the

worst, he can get along without the vote and still feel that he is a citizen of the best country in the world. He doesn't think the vote is important anyway, because no matter whom or what he votes for, he gets what big business wants him to get.

But—this very acquiescent and patriotic American, who is taking everything so quietly, is probably the most dangerous when once aroused. These very beliefs that he is as good as the next man, and that the country is basically of and for the people, will turn him into a raging fury once his already crumbling faith in politicians and promises are destroyed. When he cannot get that little which he wants, he is very apt to take more than he originally asked for—and take it by force.

That is the feeling I got in talking with those who had already picked up rifles to get what they thought was rightfully theirs when no one seemed inclined to give it to them.

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## THE NEED OF A SCAPEGOAT

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### XV. THE NEED OF A SCAPEGOAT

WHEN millions are unemployed, live on relief, or work for less than a living wage, and the economic system responsible for this condition sees no way out of the economic difficulties, that system is bound to collapse. Injections of adrenalin in the form of doles, work relief, public projects, the stagger system and those others which we witnessed and are witnessing, can maintain life only temporarily. A system based upon fierce competition for profits inevitably means closed factories and unemployment, struggles for markets and wars. A system where the government spends millions to teach farmers how to grow bigger and better crops and then pays them to destroy those crops is insane.

In a period like this which produces such insanities, a capitalistic government must do one of two things. It must either admit the failure of the capitalist system and surrender its profit motive, and thus its very reason for existence, or it must try to continue in power by explaining why its acts are so mad without placing the blame upon the economic system. The people can be told for just so long that unemployment and hunger are the results of a temporary depression, that we have gotten out of other

depressions, that ever-lowering wage scales are temporary measures. Eventually they must be told that their misery is due to definite causes or in their growing bitterness the people may turn against the economic system; hence, capitalism needs a scapegoat on which to blame the economic conditions of the country. This need is not always the result of a clearly defined perception; often it is an instinctive grasping at any explanation which avoids the logical consideration of economic causes which would lead to the realization that capitalism has now fulfilled its historic function and is disintegrating because of its inherent contradictions.

When a similar situation confronted the leading industrialists and financiers in Germany, Hitler had two scapegoats available: Communism and the Jew. Both were used to weld a nationalistic spirit in a conquered people deep in economic and spiritual depression. In the United States economic conditions are rapidly ripening for a scapegoat. Our people are bewildered by economic problems which most of them do not understand and cannot solve. The average American does not understand "economic system" or "political science." If he is told a banker or a millionaire is responsible for his ills he can understand it and vent his hate on them. If that hate can be deflected from "millionaires," "bankers," and "politicians" into another channel, the financiers and industrialists would get a breathing-spell in their flounderings to get out of the depression.

Here, too, we have two scapegoats: Communism and the Jew. The Communist is always a likely subject, due to the patriotism of the average American. Normally, the use of Communism—the charge that it is an alien doctrine bent on overthrowing our government—as the scapegoat would serve the immediate purpose of diverting the minds of the people from the pressing questions of jobs and bread; but those controlling the country know full well that the Com-



munist Party is weak numerically. Since this militant group is not responsible for the contradictions in the economic system, an attack upon the Communists, even outlawing them, would be of temporary value only. The contradictions within the capitalist system would still be there and another scapegoat would be needed, one which could not be outlawed as a body but one composed of millions of individuals against whom antagonisms could be turned as individuals. Such an attack would be long and drawn out. The only scapegoat which could be used for this purpose is the Jew.

There has always been a latent antagonism against this racial and religious minority in this country but it is only since the depression became acute that it took a sudden spurt forward. The economic conditions here were ripe for it. Nazi agents swarmed over the United States to counteract anti-Hitler propaganda and this could be done only by explaining why Germany held the Jews responsible for its ills; and to do this effectively it was necessary to show that Jews were equally responsible for America's ills. The Nazi need of making these explanations unleashed a tremendous flood of anti-semitic propaganda. Hitler's agents here were not interested in converting America to Nazi-ism. They wanted only to stem the tide of anti-Nazi propaganda which was affecting Germany's trade and credit relations with the United States.

As a result, a web of anti-Jewish hatred has been woven around the country within the past two years and the effects upon our national life have been profound and far-reaching. In the business, professional, and cultural worlds, anti-semitism has been whipped up until the Jew now feels a sense of isolation which he thought he had lost with the ghetto days of the eighteenth century. It is no unusual thing to find handbills littering New York subway cars, preaching hatred of the Jew. In the Yorkville section of New York,

where Germans have congregated, Jews are made to feel that they are pariahs. Jews coming to the 85th Street synagogue find a black swastika marked on it. Windows of Jewish-owned department stores have swastikas scratched upon them. A "liberal" priest invites Nazis to come and preach hatred of the Jew from his pulpit on Second Avenue.

A mob of German Nazis raid a hosiery shop at 86th Street and Lexington Avenue in New York and demand that they be shown German-made goods. In Boston a crowd of young American hoodlums rush through the streets crying "Kill the Jew!"

The latent anti-semitism in this country is open today. Generally, this race hatred is vaguely attributed to Nazi agents but even the vast majority of those spreading the "hate-the-Jew" creed have no exact idea of its source. Normally sensible Americans, completely bewildered by the increasing economic crisis, dazed by events they cannot understand, lend their ears to the cry that the Jew is responsible for the world's ills.

The threads of the web of anti-semitism reach out in many directions. One starting point is Colonel Edwin Emerson, soldier of fortune, mediocre author, and fairly competent war correspondent. Until a few months ago, Emerson lived at 215 East 15th Street, New York City and had an office in Room 1923 at 17 Battery Place, the address of the German Consulate-General. Room 1923 was rented by a representative of the German Consul-General. The rent paid was nominal and at least in one instance was paid in cash by Hitler's official. For six weeks prior to the renting of this room Emerson had desk space with the German Consulate-General.

The May 15, 1933 issue of the *Amerika's Deutsche Post*, a Nazi paper published in this country, which contains vitriolic attacks on Jews, carried an advertisement stating

that the editor of this paper made his headquarters in Emerson's room. This was the first indication, after Hitler came to power, that Emerson had arrived in this country to handle propaganda for the Nazis.

For many years, Emerson had wandered about the globe covering assignments for newspapers and magazines and always bragging about his Americanism and "patriotism." One of his great boasts was that he was with Roosevelt's Rough Riders during the Spanish-American War; what he never told was that Roosevelt brought him back from Cuba in irons!

From his room, for which the German Consul-General paid, Emerson launched his "Friends of Germany," most members of which are now in the "Friends of the New Germany." This organization is among the chief distributors of anti-semitic propaganda in the United States. Colonel Emerson carried on his propaganda somewhat stupidly. The "Friends of Germany" held meetings with "storm troops" in full uniform; bitter attacks were made against Jews at large mass meetings; visiting officers and sailors from German ships docked in New York appeared at these meetings to preach the song of hate until the Jewish and non-Jewish press protested with equal vigor. The keynote of these talks was sounded by Edward L. Sullivan, of Boston. At a meeting held at Turnhalle, Lexington Avenue and 85th Street in New York, on June 5, 1934, Sullivan repeatedly referred to Jews as "dirty, stinking kikes."

The reaction on the part of the American press at this crude propaganda was unmistakable. Propaganda Minister Goebbels in Berlin became annoyed and the entire German foreign propaganda service was reorganized. Emerson was ordered back to Germany, but before he returned for explicit instructions on how not to antagonize America while trying to establish a friendly feeling for Nazi Germany, he



had vented his hatred of the Jew at meetings throughout the country and placed the dissemination of anti-semitic propaganda on an organized basis.

In October, 1933, one Royal Scott Gulden, who had been in close touch with Emerson, tried to organize an espionage system to watch Communists. Emerson had taught him that all Jews were Communists and all Communists Jews. Gulden heard that the mother of the then Candidate for Mayor, Fiorello LaGuardia, was a Jewess and consequently concluded that he must be a Communist. He decided to put spies on LaGuardia's trail in the hope of turning up enough "evidence" to have him impeached should he be elected. In this effort Gulden enlisted the aid of Fred R. Marvin, a notorious professional patriot. On October 17, 1933, Marvin sent in his report on LaGuardia, but it soon became evident that New York was not yet ready to impeach a man because his mother happened to be Jewish.

By this time Gulden had made connections with other patriots who were determined to stamp out the "Communist" and "Jewish" peril. At three o'clock on the afternoon of March 10, 1934, a very secret meeting was called by Gulden at 139 East 57th Street. Present were Gulden, J. Schmidt, Richard Rollins, and William Dudley Pelley, head of the Silver Shirts.

At this meeting a plan was worked out to attack Communist groups wherever they met on street corners for "in this way state and city governments will be aroused to suppress the Jew in the Communist movement." The patriots decided that at all times the cry was to be "Kill the nearest Jew!"

The meeting also decided to disseminate anti-semitic propaganda, especially among the military, naval, and police forces. Gulden, with the aid of a few of his followers prepared a card reading:



## CHRISTIAN AMERICANS WATCH!

I AGREE TO OPPOSE Non-Christian candidates for public office.

I AGREE TO PATRONIZE Christian-American Firms and Shops.

I AGREE TO COMBAT AND PROTEST against all un-American forms of government in the United States.

Notices of Meetings will be sent.

Name.....

Address.....

Sent by.....

..... Block Sentinel

The cards were distributed wholesale around Wall Street as well as the German area in Yorkville. Bundles were mailed to Chicago, Toledo, St. Louis, and Los Angeles. Large batches of the thoroughly discredited "Protocols of Zion" were ordered by this patriotic group and distributed on board naval vessels and in military camps to arouse soldiers and sailors to the "menace of the Jew."

Gulden's connections with influential persons were extensive. His associates knew one James True who ran an "Industrial Control Report" under the name of The James True Associates, from the National Press Building in Washington. The anti-semitic propaganda sank into True, and to the many business men (including Jews) who were subscribers to his reports, he mailed doses of propaganda in the guise of unbiased reports. For instance, on June 30, 1934, his report states:

More than 500 men and women have been placed in important positions who are opposed to the Christian religion. Many men and women who are known Communistic radicals, acknowledged atheists, have been placed in positions of power and have written laws which a bought Congress has passed without question.

A large number of intelligent Jews see the writing on the wall,

protest against the opportunity offered Nazi organizations, and say the large number of Jews in the government set-up should be reduced. . . . Gentile radicals and Communists whisper that if the New Deal plan should fail, if Americanism is strong enough to block their plans for sovietization, they will make the Jews the goat. The way looks dark for several million American Jews who have contributed much to the social and industrial development of the country.

Gulden's work spread. Pelley's interest had been aroused and at three o'clock on the afternoon of March 31, 1934, another group of men met at the 57th Street address. Guards were placed at the doors. This group consisted of Commander Charles E. Gilpin, Col. C. W. Throckmorton, Gulden, Col. E. N. Sanctuary, Capt. Moriarity, J. H. Roys, and Walter Johnson.

The country was in the fifth year of the crisis. To these men it seemed that the revolution would be imported in a rowboat any hour and the Jews, as Jews, were held responsible for Moscow, the Third International, and the Mississippi flood. It sounds insane, of course, but—so were Hitler's ravings before he got into power. This very secret group decided to organize an espionage and propaganda system among the Jews and the Communists. Members were to be taken from the upper strata of the military, business, and social life of the nation, with each member, before he was accepted, carefully investigated. It was called the "Order of '76" and Royal Scott Gulden was appointed secretary to direct espionage and propaganda.

The discussions of this espionage order invariably turned around the Jew. I shall quote a sample from the minutes of one of their secret meetings, held in the Colonial Room, at the Hotel Weylin in New York:

The Chairman: I would like to ask this group. A columnist on one of our papers has now come out as a Communist. He was formerly a left-wing Socialist. I refer to Heywood Broun.

You may have noticed the doctrine he is preaching, how he begins to talk about apples and pears and before he is through, he is talking about good old Communism. In his last article he virtually predicted revolution. It remains to be seen what America would do in the future, whether America would take the whole ground or the middle ground or something like that. I call your attention to this column and ask you to watch it. The owners of that paper are more than friendly to Soviet Russia.

Question: What paper is it?

The Chairman: The *World-Telegram*, which is one of the Scripps-Howard chain of papers. I am going to ask Col. Sanctuary for another word before we are dismissed.

Col. Sanctuary: I will be very brief. Of course what is going on in this room is confidential, but knowing the importance of getting to Congressman McFadden certain information, I had the printer run off two galleys of the Chapter in my book entitled "The Termite Litvinoff." I am sending him this to use with certain key men in Washington. If we can't play this game together, I am going to drop out of it. I just want to read you now the contents of my book: *Conspiring Termites*. I suppose you want to know what termites are. Well, they are white ants that dig into wood and undermine the structure. "Termites of the Y.M.C.A.'s and Churches," "Peace Treaty Termites," "International Termites," "Social and Community Termites," "The Termite at Work," "Termite Litvinoff, Bullitt, etc.," "Germany and the Jew," "Sidelights on the Protocols," etc., etc.

Question: May I ask about the protocols? Are they still in force?

Col. Sanctuary: The protocols are absolutely true. It is authentic. It is going on today.

Mr. Athey: Do you know why the mystery of Lindbergh's son was not solved? Did you know that Senator Morrow attended a Jewish dinner and died of poisoning? Lindbergh's son was killed by a ritual murder.

This stuff sounds incredible yet this order has as members influential men and women in close contact with the military, business, and political worlds.

There was in Washington, D. C., a member of this secret order who met with Gulden frequently, and that leads us to another of the Nazi-spun threads of anti-semitic hate.

On February 22, 1934, a merger of the Republican Senatorial and Congressional Campaign Committees to conduct the party's Congressional campaign independent of the Republican National Committee was announced in a joint statement by Senator Daniel O. Hastings, of Delaware and Representative Chester C. Bolton, of Ohio, chairmen, respectively, of the two committees on Capitol Hill.

Several weeks before this announcement the two committees had already employed Sidney Brooks, for years head of the research bureau of the International Telephone and Telegraph Company, to work for them. Brooks, due to his position, is close in the confidences of Republican Senators and Congressmen. State secrets are confided to him. He has his fingers on the pulse of political matters.

Shortly after he took charge of this bureau for the Senators and Congressmen, Brooks made a hurried visit to New York. On March 4, 1934, he drove to the Hotel Edison and went directly to Room 830 where a man registered as "William D. Goodales of Los Angeles" was awaiting him. Mr. "Goodales" was William Dudley Pelley, head of the Silver Shirts, who had come to New York secretly to confer with Brooks and Gulden! After this conference, the two went to Gulden's office where they had a confidential talk that lasted over an hour, during which an agreement was made to merge the Order of '76 with the Silver Shirts so as to carry on their anti-semitic propaganda more effectively.

When the McCormack Congressional Committee investigating Nazi activities in this country got wind of the Order of '76 and questioned Gulden about the rumored merger with the Silver Shirts, Gulden denied it; but Paul A. Toal, foreign adjutant of the Silver Shirts, wrote to Gulden on



March 6, 1934, two days after the secret meeting of Gulden, Pelley, and Brooks in Gulden's office, as follows:

Dear Friend Gulden:

Today the Chief (William D. Pelley) gave me the good news that your organization has definitely consolidated its membership with the Silver Legion.

Needless to say, it makes me very happy to know that you are now one of us, not only in spirit, as you always were, but also in "action and emblem." Let's do fine work together.

This Letter Service, which was suspended for a few weeks, will now go on with new pep and vigor.

Please get in touch with my friend, General E. S. Imnadze, 51 East 129th Street, New York City. He is one of our members. A former Imperial Russian General, he is doing "little jobs" and is financially rather incapacitated. But he is the Head of the Second North American Section of the All Russian Combatants, consisting of former Imperial Russian Officers, and is able to be of real help to us in our work. He is supplying me with valuable information from Paris about Soviet developments.

As you know, friend Melnikoff is now Editor of the "Russkaja Gazetta" and very anxious to print an English Edition in his Russian plant. Maybe it would be advisable to consider his propositions with your men in New York.

Brooks himself, on his mysterious visits to New York, went to 17 Battery Place, which, the reader will remember, houses the German Consul-General's office. At that address he visited one John E. Kelly. In a letter to Kelly dated as far back as December 27, 1933, he wrote: "I will be in New York Friday to Monday and can be reached in the usual manner—Gramercy 5-9193 (care Emerson)."

We now find that this man, close to high officials of the United States Government, is meeting people to merge anti-semitic organizations, calling on persons in the German Consulate building, and having a telephone number care of one

Emerson. Let us see if this Emerson is the same one who organized the anti-semitic propaganda in this country.

Sidney Brooks also is a member of the secret Order of '76. Before anyone can join, he must, in his own handwriting, and sealed with his own fingerprints, give certain details of his life. Brooks' application to this espionage society shows that he uses his mother's maiden name. *His father is Col. Edwin Emerson, Hitler agent!*

On March 3, 1934, while the negotiations for the merging of the espionage order and the Silver Shirts were going on, Edward H. Hunter, executive secretary of the Industrial Defense Association, Inc., 7 Water Street, Boston, wrote to the "Friends of Germany." In this letter the patriotic Mr. Hunter writes:

Under separate cover we are sending you twenty-five copies of our *Swan Song of Hate* as requested and you may have as many as you wish.

Several times I have conferred with Dr. Tippleskirch and at one time suggested that if he could secure the financial backing from Germany, I could start a real campaign along lines that would be very effective.

All that is necessary to return America to Americans is to organize the many thousands of persons who are victims of Judaism and I am ready to do that at any time.

Dr. Tippleskirch, with whom Hunter discussed getting money from Germany for anti-semitic work, is the German Consul in Boston!

This pleading for financial backing from Germany by one hundred per cent American patriots is quite common.

The German government itself, through its propaganda bureau, mails propaganda material direct to the Congress of the United States, some of it coming from Budapest and purporting to be material issued by Americans abroad. Other propaganda material is openly imported in the form of books, leaflets, and pamphlets for distribution. These pub-

lications ostensibly deal with subjects other than the Jew, such as the Communist, but within the text are some of the most vicious attacks against the Jew ever published. Still other material is smuggled into this country on German ships.

Such material as the throwaway picturing a cross with a crown of thorns over it and captioned "*Judas Macht Deutschland Tod*" was smuggled off the North German Lloyd ship *Europa* and consigned to Guenther Orgell, secretary of the United German Societies, through whom it was distributed to various branches of the "Friends of Germany" throughout the country.

## II

There is an air of mystery on the seventh floor of 139 East 57th Street, New York City. Well-dressed men and women enter and leave Room 703. Sometimes they carry brief cases and look intent and serious. To the observer who wanders onto this floor, Room 703, the entrance to a suite, is just another office in an office building, possibly a private office because there is no firm's or individual's name on the glass door. Those running this office do not want any names on their doors, they do not want too many people to know that this is the headquarters of the secret society for spying on "Jews and Communists," the Order of '76.

There are a wooden bench and several desks in Room 703. To the right as you enter are two more rooms, each with desks at which serious-looking men sit studying papers; and to the left, Room 704, is another office, the one where the files are kept and where Royal Scott Gulden acts as secretary of the espionage society and as director of spreading the "hate-the-Jew" creed. Gulden himself is a neatly dressed, middle-aged man with graying temples, thinning hair, and washed-out gray eyes. He was at a desk heaped high with

letters and clippings when I walked in. The two men with whom he was talking turned around quickly. Strangers do not wander into these offices by accident.

Gulden raised his eyes interrogatively, a pleasant smile spreading over his pale face.

"My name is Spivak—John L. Spivak——"

The two men with Gulden closed in on me almost automatically.

"I'm interested in the growth of anti-semitism in this country. I find that your organization has established an espionage system among Jews and Communists and carries on anti-semitic propaganda——"

"Well?" said Gulden coldly.

"I should like to interview you."

One of the men beside me started to laugh.

"You seem to know all about it," returned Gulden suavely. "You don't have to interview me." He turned to his desk.

"But I'd like to very much," I assured him sweetly.

He raised his head and looked at me steadily for a moment.

"All right," he said curtly. "What do you want?"

"These gentlemen?" I nodded to the two men still standing beside me.

"You want to know everything, don't you?"

"I know one of them. This man is Eugene Daniels who is supposed to have thrown the stink bomb in the stock exchange, isn't he?"

Daniels smiled embarrassedly. The head of the secret espionage order bowed gracefully.

"Pardon me. Mr. Daniels—Mr. Spivak. This gentleman is Mr. Hemple—Jonas Hemple. Now let's get down to business. I'm very busy. What do you want?"

"I just want to know why you believe in anti-semitism."

"I don't believe in anti-semitism," Gulden smiled. "I don't believe in measles, either, but we have them. I don't



believe in poison ivy but you get infected by it. It's the same with the Jews. We've got them. Our main work is patriotic, chiefly against Communism. And when we find that Communism and Judaism are one, then we fight Judaism."

The other men nodded. Mr. Daniels launched on a long dissertation to assure me that he did not mind the Jews. I finally had to explain that it was Mr. Gulden's views I was interested in. Mr. Daniels left.

"How did you discover that Communism and Judaism are one?" I asked.

"Oh, we got a barrel of clippings. . . ."

He rose to get a folder out of a file. I noticed a slight bulge on his right hip. I got up and patted it gently.

"What's this—a gat?"

Gulden turned upon me with a nervous tenseness. The mysterious and heavy-set Mr. Hemple stepped quickly to my side. Gulden returned to his desk without the folder.

"Yes, a gun," he smiled, his washed-out grey eyes boring into me.

"What calibre?"

"Thirty-two, Smith and Wesson——"

He drew the revolver from its holster and placed it on his desk.

"You needn't be afraid," he smiled assuringly. "We don't hurt people—unless they hurt us," he added significantly.

"Maybe I'd better hold it then," I laughed.

Gulden smiled grimly. "I think maybe we'd better put it in my desk." He opened a drawer and deposited the pistol.

"Got a permit?"

He turned upon me irritably.

"Who the hell——"

"Let's see your permit!"

Gulden looked startled. Without further word he fished a billfold from his coat pocket and handed me his pistol permit: C23,609.

I don't know why this head of the espionage society should have obeyed my sharp tone, unless men with guilty consciences always try to avoid trouble. The man seemed bewildered after he handed me his permit and for a space eyed me narrowly as though trying to decide whether he should answer questions or throw me bodily out of his office.

"I don't know why I should answer questions," he said finally, "but I said I would, so let's get it over with. I want you to get this straight. We're not opposed to the Jews as Jews, but every Jew is a potential Communist, and both are breaking down the laws of the land."

"How do you know Jews are breaking the law any more than the gentiles?"

"*The Protocols of Zion* prove it."

"I thought they were discredited."

"I don't care whether they're discredited or not. I don't care whether they're authentic or not. All I know is that they outline a program for the Jews to capture the world and that program is working out accurately and rapidly. If the protocols are forgeries, how did they guess what was going to happen today? I believe the protocols are genuine and events are proving their authenticity!"

"You think there's a conspiracy by the Jews to capture the world?"

"I absolutely do!"

"And that these Jews are financing the Communists?"

"Certainly. They are financing the Third International and the Soviets. And as evidence I give the statement of Mr. Schiff——"

"What Mr. Schiff?"

"The financier," said Gulden vaguely. "This Mr. Schiff loaned two or four million dollars to the Bolsheviks. I don't know the exact amount, but it was up in the millions. He bragged about it, I understand."

"Didn't Germany, whose government hates the Jews and the Communists as enthusiastically as you, also loan millions to the Bolsheviks—in the form of trade credits?"

"Yes, but they did it as a war measure——"

"They extended credits since Hitler got into power."

Gulden turned irritably from me.

"I don't care what the Germans do! That's their business! I'm interested in America."

"We'll get to that——" I started to assure him, when Mr. Hemple interrupted:

"The Jews must be destroyed. Even the Old Testament says the Jews must be destroyed. Jeremiah: 34: 'Behold, I will command, saith the Lord, and I will make the cities of Judah a desolation without an inhabitant!'"

"That seems to settle it," I agreed. "But what do you do for a living?"

"I smoke cigarettes and hang around here," he returned, with obvious distaste.

I turned again to Gulden.

"It's dawning on me that you don't like the Jews. However, there are millions of them. What does your organization think should be done with them?"

"They ought to be made to stop spreading their semitism in our faces. It's just a question of how long our patience will hold out." He hesitated, shrugged his shoulders and added, "I suppose history will repeat itself."

"What do you mean by that?"

"I mean the good old-fashioned pogroms."

"Your organization is in favor of pogroms against the Jews?"

"If I say that, I'll be liable to arrest, I assume," he said slowly. "But I will say this: we're trying to prevent pogroms by preventing the Jews from driving people to start pogroms against them. We must defend ourselves. If the Jews keep sweeping on, then we will defend ourselves. You can depend

upon one thing: if pogroms are forced on us, we will not run away!"

"Forced on you!" I looked at him with amazement. "Are the Jews making pogroms against you?"

"Yes," he said heatedly. "The Jews are making economic pogroms against us. They are taking our businesses, our professions away—and if that continues pogroms will start. And when they do you can bet the Order of '76 will be there!"

He paused and added, "And I don't care if you do say that."

"Are you connected in any way with the Nazi-distributed anti-semitic propaganda in this country? The Nazis, as you know, would like to take it out on the American Jews for their boycotts and protests against the way the Jews are treated in Germany."

"We have no connection with the Nazis or the Germans in any way!" he exclaimed. "We are purely an American organization——"

At that moment, with the perfect timing of a dramatic stage entrance, a well-dressed man of about thirty, with a Teutonic face, opened the entrance door, stepped to the doorway of the private office where we sat, threw his shoulders back, brought his feet together with a click and raised his hand in the Nazi salute!

Gulden and Hemple looked at me. Both of them smiled embarrassedly. I couldn't help letting out a loud laugh. My two hosts did not stir, so I raised my hand in an answering salute.

"Heil Hitler!" I said dryly.

It is this man Gulden's organization of super-patriots, whose membership includes federal, state, and city government officials, which cooperates with paid Hitler agents in the distribution of anti-semitic propaganda.

On February 6, 1934, there was a great deal of publicity



about 300 pounds of anti-semitic propaganda which had been discovered on the German freighter *Este*. The propaganda was in burlap bags, addressed and ready to be mailed as soon as it was smuggled off the ship. It was confiscated, but neither customs officials nor the federal secret service knew who is behind and directing this smuggling nor how widely spread it is.

And at this point we come to the head of the German foreign secret service in this country. He was one of the best operatives in the German intelligence service. Not even Col. Edwin Emerson, who was sent here to organize anti-semitism in this country on a national scale, knew this man's full importance. All he knew is that when he commands they are supposed to obey—quickly.

This man is Guenther Orgell of 606 West 115th Street, New York City, ostensibly employed by the Raymond Roth Co., 25 West 45th Street, as an electrical engineer; and his official connection with the German groups in this country is only as secretary of the United German Societies. This head of the Hitler secret service in this country keeps his records and instructions from abroad in a well-hidden house at Great Kills, Staten Island.

That Nazi anti-semitic propaganda is being smuggled into the United States has been known for some time. The propaganda enters chiefly through the ports of New York and Baltimore on the East Coast and through San Pedro, Cal., and Portland, Ore., on the West Coast. At the same time the German ships on which propaganda is sent to this country are being used to carry secret reports to and from the propaganda minister and the Nazi secret service in the United States.

Let me take the reader on a trip in which secret reports are sent and received.

It is twenty minutes to ten on the evening of March 16, 1934. Germany's Queen of the Seas, the North German

Lloyd ship *Europa* is preparing to sail at midnight. The gaily illuminated boat is filled with men and women, many in evening dress, seeing friends off to Europe. German stewards, all of them members of the ship's *Nazi Gruppe*, stand about bowing, smiling, but watching every passenger and visitor carefully.

People wander all over the boat. Many visit the library on the main promenade deck, which has a German post office. There is a great deal of laughter and chatter and into this scene, dressed in an ordinary business suit, strolls Guenther Orgell, carrying a folded newspaper in his hands. He catches the post-office steward's eye. Not the slightest sign of recognition passes between them or shows on their faces. Orgell casually takes four letters from his coat pocket and hands them to the steward, who as casually slips them into his pocket. There are no stamps on the letters.

Still so casual in manner that the average observer would not even have noticed the passage of the letters, Orgell wanders over to a desk in the library and rapidly writes another letter—so important, apparently, that he dared not carry it with him for fear of a mishap. The letter is sealed and handed to the steward.

The library has a great many visitors. No one seems to be paying any attention to this visitor or passenger talking to the steward. With a quick glance around him, Orgell takes in everyone in the library and seems satisfied. Again he catches the steward's eye. This time he nods. The steward opens a closet in the library, the second one left of the main aisle on the port side of the ship towards the stern of the boat. A thin package is taken from its hiding place and quickly slipped to Orgell, who covers it with his newspaper and leaves the ship promptly.

German secret instructions have been sent and received.

Most German ships entering the Port of New York arrange social evenings on board when anywhere from several hun-

dred to several thousand persons are entertained. At the conclusion of these parties so many people leave that it is impossible to keep track of them and in that crowd much of the propaganda is smuggled off by specially chosen Nazi agents. At other times, the propaganda comes consigned to "respectable" addresses. Each slip has a specific address or collection of addresses to which material is sent. The S.S. *St. Louis*, which docks at Pier 86, for instance, has its pro-Hitler and anti-semitic propaganda wrapped up in neat packages and consigned to the German Book Importing Co., 27 Park Place, New York City, or to the A. Bruderhausen Bookshop, 15 West 45th Street, New York City.

The German Ministry of Propaganda, however, does not always dare to take a chance on being caught by addressing anti-semitic propaganda to respectable book shops. It prefers to have it smuggled in in the dead of night when customs officials are asleep on the job. And this procedure is under the personal direction of the German Foreign Office. Orgell uses men as aids who were German war veterans, who have proved their allegiance to Hitler, and are active in spreading anti-semitic and pro-fascist propaganda in this country. Orgell himself is in constant communication, via North German Lloyd and Hamburg-American ships, with Goebbels in Berlin.

Whenever Orgell needs trusted men to take messages to and from the boats as well as to smuggle material off them he usually calls upon the American branch of the Stahlhelm, or Steel Helmets, which drills secretly in anticipation of *Der Tag* in this country. Only in the event of the most important messages does he go aboard the ships personally. Orgell's liaison man in these smuggling activities is Frank Mutschinski, a painting contractor of 116 Garland Court, Garritsen Beach, N. Y.

Frank Mutschinski first entered the country on June 16, 1920, from Germany, on the S.S. *George Washington*. He

was commander of one of the American branches of the Stahlhelm, which had offices at 174 East 85th Street, New York. While he was in command, he received his orders direct from Franz Seldta, at present minister of labor under Hitler. Seldta at that time was in Magdeburg, Germany. Branches of the German Stahlhelm, all of which are carrying on intensive anti-semitic propaganda, were established by him and Orgell in Rochester, Chicago, Philadelphia, Newark, N. J., Detroit, Los Angeles, and even one in Toronto. The various branches are in constant communication with one another, disseminate the hate-the-Jew propaganda in unison, though each one operates autonomously on direct orders from Germany.

In Orgell's smuggling activities he needs aid and his chief assistant, Carl Brunkhorst, was supplied by Mutschinski. It was Brunkhorst's job to deliver the secret letters. The smuggling in of Nazi uniforms in this country, as well as the job of handling the secret letters, is in the hands of Paul Bante of 186 East 93rd Street, New York City. Bante is a member of the 244th Coast Guard as well as the New York National Guard!

### III

Communism is the bug-a-boo of the rich, the employing class, whether they be Jew or gentile, and it was inevitable that some shrewd observers of the American scene would take advantage of this fear in the hearts of employers and capitalize on it. Hence, we find the development of secret organizations which, for a fee, promise to inform the employing class about the threat of revolution, what time it will occur, and who will lead it. Wealthy Jews and gentiles fall for this racket. A great many presumably smart Jews and gentiles, terrified by these "secret" reports, eagerly seek information about the impending expropriation. Such a one,



for instance, is Col Robert McCormick, publisher of the influential Chicago *Tribune*.

If you should ever happen to be in Col McCormick's bedroom and see him peer cautiously under his bed before retiring, in search of a Communist armed with at least two bombs, four pistols and a knife clenched between his teeth, you can give credit to a gentleman named Harry A. Jung of Chicago. Jung is one of the Colonel's protégés and supplies the Colonel with a great deal of his "inside" information about Communists.

Jung is the head of a widespread espionage organization, the American Vigilant Intelligence Federation, Post Office Box 144, Chicago. This organization was originally founded to spy on Communists and Socialists, but Jung discovered he needed a new terror-inspiring "issue" with which to collect money from suckers. He found it in the "menace of the Jew," and now he is one of the national leaders in the distribution of anti-semitic propaganda. There are anti-semites who actually believe the stuff in the *Protocols of Zion*, but others, active in spreading the seeds of hate against Jews, do so only because it has become a money-raising proposition. Jung is in the latter class.

The location of his office where the spy reports are filed is never given to his members, lest "Jews and Communists" descend upon him. Secrecy surrounds his headquarters and his work. As a matter of record, the entire suite of offices is in the Chicago *Tribune* Tower.

To put it baldly, in the course of Jung's racketeering he has collected and still collects large sums by playing Jew and gentile against Communist, and gentile against Jew.

When Hitler came into power, this prince of racketeers discovered that he could get cash by fanning the smouldering flames of anti-semitism in the United States. After five years of economic crisis for millions of Americans, and failure on the part of most of them to understand the causes,

putting the blame on the "International Jew" was easy. This "patriot" promptly started disseminating the "Hate the Jew" creed on a large scale. And in the course of his activity he used money collected from Jews to distribute the *Protocols of Zion* as well as other anti-semitic propaganda.

Jung has been a professional patriot for years. By crying "Americanism" and "patriotism," inveighing against Communists, Socialists, or anyone else who favored changing the present economic system, he managed to get support from worried capitalists. He organized a widespread espionage system in the radical movements, collected vast files of "material"—all of it available in *The Daily Worker* and other Communist publications—and armed with this material he sends agents to call on gullible business men and paint harrowing pictures of the Muscovites now on the high seas on the way to capture the American government. The salesmen are good—they collect; and in turn they get a 40 per cent commission of the pickings.

When Harry Jung heard that William Dudley Pelley of Silver Shirts fame was making big money out of anti-semitism and that others like Edward H. Hunter of the Industrial Defense Association in Boston was talking with the German Consul about getting money from Germany for anti-semitic propaganda, he got busy. He discovered that the Jews were a menace and that they were plotting not only to seize the United States but the whole world, Scandinavia included. *The Protocols of Zion* were raked up, and armed with these, Jung's high-pressure salesmen wandered about collecting the shekels from scared Christian business men, and getting their commissions.

But—there are a lot of wealthy Jewish business men. These certainly would not fall for the *Protocols of Zion* and yet their checks are good, too. So Jung's nimble agents sell the Jewish business men the idea that the Third International is on its way here to take their business away and

nationalize their wives and daughters. The wealthy Jews, half-scared out of their wits, contribute to fight Communism. In this way Jung's salesmen collect from anti-Communist Jew and from anti-semitic gentile simultaneously.

Among the contributors to the American Vigilant Intelligence Federation are business houses owned by prominent Jews and other businesses in which Jews are heavy stockholders. Before listing some of the nationally known of these contributors, whose money went into the dissemination of anti-semitic propaganda, let me explain how Jung operates his spy organization.

The American Vigilant Intelligence Federation was originally used to spy on radical and labor groups. The information collected by Jung was sold to employers for a good sum whenever there was a strike or a threat of a strike. When that didn't work, Jung used to put on "Americanization" campaigns and collect money that way. Only since Hitler got into power has Jung picked on the Jew.

The Federation itself is run with the utmost secrecy. Names are never used by spies. An agent's report is signed only by a number. Even at their secret meetings the spies are known to one another only by numbers and not by names, particularly the "Inner Circle," a group of eight men who advise Jung on the policies to be followed in fighting "the Jewish menace." The name and address of each number is kept in closely guarded files. Beside Jung and his private secretary only "No. 22" has the keys to the office where the spy reports are kept. No. 22's name, if anyone wishes to write him directly, is Joe Cerny. The spy reports are collected from Box 144, Chicago Post Office, by Miss Rose Peterson, Jung's secretary.

An identification tag is mailed to each agent with his instructions. These "confidential instructions," filling four typewritten pages, go into great detail. I shall quote some of them in part. They read:



These instructions are for your eyes only. They must be preserved and read carefully. . . . In brief the following Instructions cover (A) your conduct; (B) your duties, and (C) your responsibilities; all voluntarily undertaken as a working patriot; tritely but truly stated as—For God (against anti-God)—for Home (against Nationalism of Man, Woman, and Child)—For Country (Americanism not Internationalism).

You are cautioned to:

Sign all communications by your number only, your signature is not necessary.

Address all communications simply to Post Office Box 144, Chicago, Illinois.

Confidential matters of the organization should only be discussed in private and in confidence. Therefore use discretion on street cars, taxi cabs, buses, the streets, restaurants, and anywhere in public where you might be overheard or others might listen in.

Your Identification Tag (please remove from under the seal on last page) is to be carried with you always. It should be displayed only to identify yourself to other members or as a test to find out if another is a member. It is purposely made inconspicuous and meaningless, almost like an ordinary telephone slug, so that if lost, it can mean nothing to the finder and is readily replaceable.

Members of this anti-labor and anti-semitic espionage organization rarely meet as a group. Occasionally, however, certain selected ones considered trustworthy by Jung, "No. 1," and his Inner Circle advisors, meet to discuss, not Communism, but "the menace of the Jew," and what steps to take to distribute anti-semitic propaganda. At these meetings the members are addressed only by their numbers.

On June 28, 1934, for instance, a special Inner Circle meeting was held in Room 103 at the Auditorium Hotel, Chicago. There were five persons present: Jung, Gail Carter, Charles Wienne, Clemens Studebaker, and Lawrence Harper. Studebaker is a member of the automobile family.



When the door was carefully locked, Jung informed them of a new "Jewish conspiracy" he had discovered, by dramatically spreading the *United States Daily* before them.

"This is a copy of David Lawrence's paper," he announced. "Lawrence has always espoused the cause of the Jews and also the cause of the present administration. But in this particular edition he seems to take issue with the Brain Trust. Frankly, I have been puzzled by this seeming change of attitude on his part, but after careful thought I have come to the conclusion that the Brain Trusters, the Communists, and the Jews have determined that they are going toward the revolution too fast and they have delegated David Lawrence to call a temporary halt. He is to act as a stop-gap so that they will not be over-confident and cause things to happen before the proper time. I am merely telling you this so that you will not be fooled by any propaganda put out by the Jews through their mouth piece, David Lawrence, and the *United States Daily*, which is his organ."

At the conclusion of this meeting Jung pulled a letter out of his pocket with several copies which he distributed to the five members of the ultra-secret Inner Circle.

"This is a letter gotten out by the Friends of the New Germany. It is a sort of chain letter. Each of us has to copy it twenty times and send it out to those we know so that they in turn can send it out. In this way we can spread the information about the Jews widely throughout the country. I ask all of you present to see to it that it gets wide circulation."

The letter read:

DO YOU REALIZE that we are nothing but JEWISH SLAVES?

DO YOU REALIZE THE DANGER, which confronts us by the Jews in the United States is much greater than we anticipate?

DO YOU REALIZE that every nation which accepted the Jews, signed its own doom? The Jewish sharks already own New York City, let us prevent them from conquering our whole United States. The Jews think they are superior to us gentiles, but their religion and business is nothing but an international racketeering, blood sucking gangsterdom, exploiting the poorest of the poor to the last drop of their blood.

Who works for the Jews under the most unsanitary conditions, long hours and for slave wages until the body and mind is a wreck? THE GENTILES. . . .

The Jews are the lowest international race on earth, prospering through thievery without consciousness, they are the biggest enemies and the cause of the destruction of the U.S.A.

HIT THE JEWS WHEREVER YOU CAN.

It is for this sort of propaganda and the distribution of the *Protocols of Zion* that Jung and his high-pressure salesmen collect money from prominent Jews and gentiles in Chicago. Some of those who contribute know that the money is to be used to spread anti-semitic material. Some think that it is to be used only to fight Communism. There is no actual evidence that the Jews who contributed to Jung knew their money has been and is being used to spread anti-semitism.

Among those who contributed are firms on whose boards of directors are Jews, whose stockholders include many wealthy Jews, and banks many of whose depositors are Jews. I shall list only some of the most prominent firms whose money has gone into spreading anti-semitic propaganda within the past two years. (All of these listed sent checks on other dates besides those listed here, but it would take too much space to record all contributions) :

June 5, 1934—Edison General Electric Appliance Co.

June 8, 1934—Corn Products Refining Co.

June 12, 1923—Mrs. Finley J. Shepard (the former Miss Helen Gould, long a supporter of White Russians and of the

National Civic Federation, about which organization much will be told subsequently).

June 13, 1934—Stewart Warner Co.

June 16, 1934—A. B. Dick

July 11, 1934—Florsheim Shoe Co.

August 15, 1934—Northern Trust Co.

June 6, 1933—First National Bank.

June 9, 1933—Sears Roebuck.

July 18, 1933—Rockford Bank & Trust.

August 22, 1933—International Harvester Co.

August 23, 1933—General American Tank Car Corp.

December 16, 1933—William Wrigley, Jr.

With money collected from Jews, Jung is able to order vast quantities of anti-semitic propaganda which he sells to other anti-semitic organizations. Jung likes to profit even in spreading the "Hate the Jew" creed. Let me illustrate. On Dec. 1, 1933, shortly before he got a sizeable sum from the King of Chewing Gum, William Wrigley, Jr., Jung wrote to Harry F. Sieber, treasurer of the Silver Legion of America:

In response to yours addressed to R. I. Peterson on November 28, we can give you a price of sixty cents per copy in quantity lots of the "Protocols."

As for "Halt, Gentile! and Salute the Jew," same can be had at ten cents per copy in quantity lots, or fifteen cents a piece.

## XVI. WHAT THE 'PATRIOTS' ARE DOING

ON May 29, 1933, much to the surprise of Republican leaders in the House of Representatives, Congressman Louis T. McFadden, of Pennsylvania, launched a vitriolic attack upon Jews from the floor. It was the first time in American history that the Jewish race was attacked in halls supposedly dedicated to preserving racial and religious freedom.

The country was astounded. No one knew what was behind the amazing act of this man who had been a Congressman for almost twenty years. Efforts were made to expunge his speech from the record but he opposed this move. It was pointed out to him that his remarks were based upon the *Protocols of Zion*, published in the Dearborn *Independent*, that the "Protocols" had been exposed as forgeries, and that Henry Ford, publisher of the Dearborn *Independent*, had publicly apologized for their appearance. McFadden, despite all this, persisted in disseminating his attack far and wide. He became the Congressional voice of "Hate-the-Jew" propaganda. He, it seemed, was making public addresses from the floor of the House exactly along the line of the anti-semitic propagandists who were organized nationally by Col. Edwin Emerson. To the public at large it was incredible that a man who talked so much about "Americanism" and "patriotism" could have anything to do with spreading race-hatred in this country.

Before the reader finishes this chapter he will understand the "Honorable" Representative McFadden's connections with organizations working hand in glove with secret German agents.



Hitler came into power in the spring of 1933. Shortly thereafter, German secret agents and propagandists started entering the United States. Some were native Americans. The first mass outbreak of anti-semitic propaganda engineered by Hitler agents came in the spring of 1933—a period in which, strangely enough, we find Congressman McFadden rising in the halls of Congress to attack the Jews while ostensibly discussing a gold-clause repeal resolution.

First, I offer evidence that Congressman Louis T. McFadden worked very closely with William Dudley Pelley of the Silver Shirts. On August 22, 1933, Pelley telegraphed McFadden to the latter's home in Canton, Pa. The telegram happened to deal with an N.R.A. question but the significance lies in the fact that Pelley of Asheville, N. C., did not ask one of his own Congressmen but went to one from Pennsylvania; the tone, too, of the telegram is interesting. There is no mark of courtesy apparent. It is the tone of a commander to a subordinate. The telegram follows:

HON. LOUIS MCFADDEN:  
CANTON, PENN.

ASHEVILLE, NO. CAR.

OUR PEOPLE REPORTING NRA OFFICIALS THREATENING TO CLOSE BUSINESS AND LEVYING FINE OF FIVE HUNDRED DOLLARS WITH POSSIBILITY OF JAIL IF NOT COMPLIED WITH. DO YOU UNDERSTAND NRA TO BE LAW THAT CAN BE THUS ENFORCED OR SHALL WE MAKE TEST CASE. SEND WORD AT ONCE COLLECT BY WESTERN UNION.

(Signed) PELLEY

On the following day Congressman McFadden, who was supposed to be busy representing the people of his own district, telegraphed Pelley for instructions as to what to do. The telegram follows:

WILLIAM DUDLEY PELLEY:

CANTON, PENN.

CHARLOTTE ST & SUNSET PARKWAY, ASHEVILLE, NO. CAR.

MAGAZINE AND PERIODICAL INDUSTRY CODE AGREEMENT AUGUST FIFTH ALTHOUGH NRA WASHINGTON STATE THEY ALONE HAVE AU-

THORITY MAKE SUCH STATEMENTS INDICATED BY YOU. ULTIMATELY PERSONS NOT COMPLYING MAY BE SUBJECT FINE AND IMPRISONMENT UNDER LAW FOR INTERSTATE BUSINESS. DISPOSITION NOW TO GIVE EVERYONE AMPLE TIME COOPERATE. SHALL YOUR CASE BE MENTIONED.

(Signed) L. T. MCFADDEN

We thus see that Congressman McFadden is close to the Silver Shirts, obeying their orders to "answer at once" and asking Pelley for instructions as to what to do. The Silver Shirts, the reader should bear in mind, merged with the Order of '76, the secret espionage society having Hitler agents as members and working closely with secret German propagandists in this country. Let us now see if Congressman McFadden has any direct connection with this espionage order.

On July 7, 1933, McFadden recorded a secret conference in New York which Royal Scott Gulden, head of the Order of '76, arranged. I quote the letter in full:

My dear Mr. Gulden:

I cannot begin to thank you for the opportunity which you gave me to meet with the group in New York which you called together. I shall hope that some good may have come from this meeting to your group. It was an inspiration to me, I can assure you, and I want you to know that I am deeply appreciative.

I am just in Washington for the day and expect to be at my home in Canton for the balance of the month where I am trying to get some very much needed rest. I shall be glad to hear from you any time.

Faithfully yours,

(Signed) L. T. MCFADDEN

A member of Congress has the right to get copies of his speech printed by the government to mail to his constituents and others. Congress also gives the Representative the privilege of stamping his name on the envelope to avoid payment of postage. McFadden wanted to flood the United States with his attack on the Jews. The government appar-

ently would not print as many copies of his speech as he wanted so the speeches were printed at someone else's expense! Who paid for the printing I do not know, but McFadden's whole life has been such as to cast doubts on any assumption that he did the paying. It has been McFadden's custom to "borrow" money, not to spend it.

This Congressional address, designed to arouse hatred in the United States, which McFadden had published, is marked "Not printed at Government Expense," but countless thousands were mailed out at Government expense! Nor were these anti-semitic speeches mailed to citizens directly by the Congressman. His office sent them out by the sack-load to the "patriotic" Order of '76 which in turn mailed them—without paying postage—to carry on the anti-semitic propaganda. Sack-loads, too, were shipped to the head of the Crusader White Shirts' espionage organization in Muscatine, Iowa, a gentleman who always places the Hitler swastika sign after his signature on official letters.

As evidence that Congressman McFadden sent bundles of his race-hatred speeches to organizations working closely with secret Hitler agents, so that they could distribute the material without paying the government postage, I offer the letter dated September 28, 1933, sent to Royal Scott Gulden by Jane C. Bittner, McFadden's private secretary:

Dear Mr. Gulden:

Two mail sacks, one containing four bundles of five hundred speeches each and the other containing two bundles of five hundred speeches each, were sent to you this morning. I shall appreciate it if you will let me know when you receive them.

Also, please turn over to your postman the two mail sacks as they are the property of the U. S. Government.

(Signed) JANE C. BITTNER,  
Secretary.

The Order of '76 not only mailed copies to individuals but also shipped them out in bundles. Everyone was having

a grand time with the government's postal facilities, since by using McFadden's name on the envelope one did not have to pay postage. It got so that vast quantities of the race-hatred speeches were returned to the Congressman, and he wrote a letter of caution. The letter, dated October 26, 1933, reads:

Dear Mr. Gulden:

Evidently some one is mailing out my speeches from New York unaddressed, as a great number of them are being returned to me here, indicating that they were mailed at Grand Central Station, New York. Possibly some one is tying them up in bundles with one address on the bundle and they get untied. I understand the Post Office is not authorized to accept packages in that manner. Maybe you can give me some light on this.

I am returning to my home and shall be glad to hear from you.

Sincerely yours,

(Signed) L. T. McFADDEN

We now see the definite connection between this Congressman and a secret espionage organization which is working closely with Hitler agents in this country. Let us now examine the envelope in which this flood of "hate-the-Jew" propaganda was sent out. The envelope, in order to get the propaganda across as well as possible, carries the following legend:

"Gentiles have the paper while Jews have the gold and lawful money."

This legend, upon which he based his attack upon the Jewish people, gives us the right to examine the "patriotic" Congressman's past to determine whether he has any evidence to support his assertion or whether, like so many dishonest people, he makes an accusation to forestall a charge of exactly the same kind against himself. I shall now present evidence that Congressman McFadden is crooked and that in fact, his whole life has been devoted to getting "the gold



and lawful money" while leaving both Jew and gentile holding worthless paper.

There was a man named Pat Marr who had an oil corporation known as the Marr Oil Corporation. McFadden learned that this company was a money-maker. He became a director of the corporation and became Chairman of the Board—a job he held up to August 30, 1923. (I go this far back so as to show that Congressman McFadden's crookedness is not a recent aberration. I can go back still farther, but the illustrations I offer will be sufficient.)

There was another director in this corporation named Rottenberg. In August, 1923, Pat Marr, in conversation with Rottenberg, said he'd like to sell his corporation and sent Rottenberg to Washington, D. C. (where McFadden lived) to get the Congressman to go to New York to negotiate with a reliable oil company for the sale of the property. Pat Marr trusted McFadden and Rottenberg—after all, McFadden was an "honorable Congressman."

Rottenberg and McFadden tried to make the deal with the Southern States Oil Corporation, through an official of the latter company named Ferris. Ferris told them the Southern States Oil Corporation was not willing to pay cash for the Marr Oil Company but would exchange its stock for the Marr company. Rottenberg objected to the proposition. Ferris thereupon suggested that if the deal were put through in exchanging the stock, the Southern States Oil Corporation would give McFadden and Rottenberg \$100,000 and an additional amount of 10,000 shares of Southern States stock over and above the number of shares to which they were entitled.

McFadden then went to Pat Marr and gave him a glowing account of Southern States Oil, urging him to take stock for his company, saying that he had known Ferris in Congress and that the man was absolutely honest. Pat Marr was persuaded to sell his company for Southern States Oil stock.

When McFadden and Rottenberg appeared for the bribe Ferris double-crossed them a little, saying that he did not have the \$100,000 but would give them \$50,000. So the boys took the \$50,000 and divided it between themselves as well as the shares.

McFadden quietly added the \$25,000 bribe to his income tax report! Pat Marr eventually was sent to prison for misusing the United States mails. When the former oil man got out he discovered that he had been double-crossed by the Congressman from Pennsylvania and sued for the return of his company. It was then that the whole story of how Congressman Louis T. McFadden was bribed came out. In a decision on this case rendered March 24, 1931, Justice Cardozo, who has since become a Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States, said:

"At the outset Rottenberg and McFadden, the agents conducting the negotiations, gave notice to Ferris, the representative of Southern States, that they would expect 'to be taken care of' for their services in recommending the exchange. To this there was assent. They received a secret gratuity of \$50,000 in cash (\$25,000 each) and 7,039 shares in addition to the number due to them at the ratio of exchange made known to the others. . . . Rottenberg and McFadden were parties to a fraudulent conspiracy."

There is much more evidence about McFadden's involved business deals which I could present, but since he was soundly defeated for re-election at the last Congressional election, I shall content myself with just the above story to illustrate the background of our "patriot" in the halls of Congress.

## II

The long arm of Nazi-directed propaganda in this country works cunningly through hidden hands. The prominent one hundred and twenty per cent "patriot," Ralph M.

Easley, chairman of the Executive Council of the National Civic Federation, 570 Lexington Avenue, New York City, has distributed anti-semitic propaganda as well as reported secretly to George Sylvester Viereck, paid Nazi agent, on the efforts of the "patriot" to stop the boycott of German goods—an act which, if successful, would be of incalculable service to Nazi Germany.

The National Civic Federation is the largest and most influential of the "patriotic" organizations, so many of which are flooding the country with the "Hate-the-Jew" creed. The Federation is close to the federal government. Mr. Easley himself makes frequent and mysterious trips to Washington to confer with Labor and State Department officials, either bringing them "information" or patriotically trying to peddle forged documents for a price—as he tried to peddle the now notorious Whalen forgeries five years ago. When he could not sell them to Robert Kelley, chief of the Far Eastern Division of the State Department, he tried to peddle them to a Hearst newspaper correspondent. And failing in that, Easley finally stuck former Police Commissioner Grover Whalen of New York with them, so that the latter rushed into print only to have the documents exposed a little later as forgeries. I mention this so that the reader will understand how the "patriot" Ralph M. Easley works.

On the National Civic Federation executive council we find very influential men. Its ramifications and influence are wide. There is, for instance, the acting president of this organization: Matthew Woll. Woll is vice-president of the American Federation of Labor, which went on record as favoring the boycott of German goods. Then there is Archibald E. Stevenson, chairman of the Department of Subversive Movements. Mr. Stevenson achieved a lot of prominence years ago by his activities in whipping up a "red" hysteria for the notorious Lusk Committee. He succeeded in developing a "red" scare which resulted in Socialist Assemblymen



being kicked out of the New York Legislature just because they were Socialists.

Jews and gentiles, scared by the Communist bugaboo raised by these men, contribute heavily to the National Civic Federation's coffers. So far as the world at large knows, Easley's life has been devoted to fighting Communism or any other form of radicalism. When the Communists were not around, he grew apoplectic about the I.W.W.'s. Then he got choleric over the Socialists—whom he now views with a mild tolerance. Easley always manages to get a "cause" to scare the propertied class. There is a great deal that I could say of this professional patriot's past, but space forbids all but the mention that he was closely connected with Boris Brasol who was largely responsible for the wide-spread dissemination of the *Protocols of Zion*. This fact of his past is little known—especially to the wealthy Jews who give money to his organization. Let me now tell of his activities when, while offering to help and work with wealthy and prominent Jews interested in counteracting anti-semitism, he was actually distributing anti-semitic propaganda, working to stop the boycott and all the while secretly reporting to George Sylvester Viereck, shrewd high-pressure Nazi propagandist.

I telephoned Easley for an appointment.

"Who's calling?" his secretary asked.

"Mr. Spivak. Is Mr. Easley in?"

"Yes, just a minute and I'll get him for you."

The minute stretched out to four by the watch—just long enough, I judged, to trace the call and get several people listening in on extension wires. Then:

"Hello," said a sharp voice.

"Mr. Easley?"

"No, this is Mr. Stevenson——"

"Not Archie Stevenson of the old 'red-baiting' fame!"

"This is Mr. Archibald Stevenson," the voice said with dignity. "What is it you wish to see Mr. Easley about?"



"I should like to see him about his anti-semitic activities. I know, of course, that he does not like Communists, but what I want to know is why he is carrying on anti-semitic work—what that has to do with his hatred of Communism?"

"Mr. Easley is not carrying on anti-semitic work——"

"I should like to know why Mr. Easley, representing the patriotic National Civic Federation, has been reporting secretly to George Sylvester Viereck, Nazi agent."

"Mr. Easley has not been reporting to Mr. Viereck," Archie Stevenson exclaimed indignantly.

"I am sorry. I have Mr. Easley's letters to Mr. Viereck," I assured him.

"Well——" There was silence for a moment. "Mr. Easley is not in at the moment. Perhaps you had better see him."

"That's why I called. Could I make an appointment?"

"Please call tomorrow at ten."

At ten the next morning I telephoned. A girl's voice answered when I gave my name.

"Oh, Mr. Spivak," it said. "I have a message for you. Mr. Easley said that on advice of counsel he would rather not see you."

We thus have an idea of the sort of person this professional "patriot" is. Mr. Viereck is an author, journalist, and editor. I will not go into his literary history. I will merely say that he is one of the shrewdest propagandists I know. He himself does not commit himself to writing. However, Mr. Easley did enough writing for both of them.

Viereck's past has shown him prominent as a German propagandist. Since Hitler got into power he has been an active Nazi propagandist. His receiving \$1,750 a month—\$1,000 of which was his "cut" for getting a fat contract for Carl Byoir (a Jew) to handle publicity for German railroads, and \$750 a month for "service" he was to render Byoir—has already come out. I do not think it is necessary to devote more space to proving him a Nazi propagandist.

It is much more important to examine his financial condition before Hitler got into power and after Viereck took a trip to Nazi Germany in 1933.

In March, 1933, after Viereck had been advising German Consul-General Kiep on "the general German-American situation," Kiep gave him a retainer of \$500 a month. This arrangement continued for five months—the money paid to Viereck in cash. This retainer was supposed to have been deposited openly to his accounts and recorded in his cash book as money earned for legitimate advice. 'I saw his cash book—there is no entry for these sums except one \$500 entry on page 114 which does not disclose the source.

At this period, when Viereck was getting money in cash from the German Consul-General, the patriotic Ralph M. Easley suddenly got interested in stopping the Jewish boycott of German goods, which by this time was seriously hampering German business and threatening to spread. Besides carrying on anti-semitic propaganda, espionage and other activities, it was to Hitler's interest that the Jews in this country stop the boycott, for it might eventually become a great factor in wrecking the Nazi regime.

On March 27, 1933, Viereck and Easley got together, with Viereck guiding the professional patriot, in moves to stop the boycott. Three days later, on the evening of March 30, 1933, Viereck cabled the ex-Crown Prince of Germany, Vice-Chancellor von Papen, and Dr. Hjalmar Schacht as follows:

The boycott of Germany here is so far only sporadic without central organization. Anti-German agitation is beginning to die down but it will assume incalculable dimensions if the threatened boycott of Saturday actually begins. In spite of the material interest in Germany's financial recovery and in spite of many currents friendly to pacifism, the American is fundamentally emotional and sentimental and if there is a battle between you and the Jews, Germany cannot count upon the support of either

the press or the public. Even the German-Americans are unanimous in condemning the boycott (German boycott of Jewish stores in Germany). The sentiment here is fraught with more peril than at any time during the war. France and Poland are beginning to regain the lost sympathies. The boycott would enhance the communist influence in Jewish organizations and elsewhere and would threaten also German minorities in other countries. If you will at least postpone the boycott, I believe, according to the requests and assurances which have reached me, that I am in a position to guarantee that the anti-German agitation in all world centers will stop at once.

After this cable was sent, Easley—whose sole interest is supposed to be fighting radicalism—suddenly got busy and arranged for secret conferences in his headquarters. Those who attended were Max Kohler, an attorney, Louis Wiley, business manager of the *New York Times*, and members of the National Civic Federation. The shrewd plea was made to the Jews that a boycott would result in a counter-boycott with the inevitable development of race hatred between Jew and gentile in the business field. The appeal was made to the Jews that they should try to stop the boycott for "patriotic" reasons. All the Jews were told about Viereck was that he was "willing to cooperate" with them.

As a result of these conferences a special committee was appointed, at Viereck's suggestion, to arrange for a Good Will Commission to Germany. On May 13, 1933, the group sent a cable to Schacht outlining this proposal. Schacht immediately cabled that this committee would be more than welcome.

The special committee chosen consisted of Matthew Woll, vice-president of the American Federation of Labor (which has numerous Jewish members in its affiliated unions and which went on record as favoring the boycott of German goods), General John Ross Delafield, George MacDonald, Herbert S. Houston, and Easley.

Easley was constantly meeting with and writing reports to Viereck and introducing him to prominent Jews. At private meetings at the homes of his friends, Easley spoke in glowing terms of Viereck. At one meeting he waxed eloquent in claiming that Viereck was "co-operating" through him (Easley) with Cyrus Adler of the American Jewish Committee. At this meeting, filled with anti-semitic propagandists, Easley read a letter he had sent to Morris Waldman, secretary of the American Jewish Committee, outlining the proposed Good Will Commission, to consist of 33 Jews, 33 Germans, 33 Americans who were not to be Jews, and one man, the chairman, to be appointed by President Roosevelt.

While these conferences were going on, Easley convinced Waldman that one of the things the Jews who are fighting anti-semitism here should do is show that not all Communists were Jews and not all Jews are Communists. The American Jewish Committee, being opposed to Communism generally, continued to keep in touch with Easley, feeling that perhaps in this way they would lessen the growing anti-semitism in the United States.

However, while these conferences were going on with the Nazi agent, Viereck, in the background, Easley was confidentially reporting to him on the activities and plans of the Jews as well as laying schemes which would enable the Nazis to come out with blasts of publicity for themselves. For instance, I quote a letter dated June 6, 1933, which Easley sent to Viereck:

CONFIDENTIAL

Mr. George Sylvester Viereck,  
627 West 113th St.,  
New York, N. Y.

Dear Mr. Viereck:

I have just learned from Mr. Waldman that he will place in my hands tomorrow a rough tentative draft of the statement



which will be issued in pamphlet form by the American Jewish Committee the first of the week and which will contain the Jews' case against the Hitler Government, making definite charges.

The suggestion is that, upon receipt of the pamphlet, Acting President Woll and General Delafield, Chairman of our Foreign Relations Committee, will write the American Jewish Committee that they have referred the charges to our German-American members, Messrs. Herman A. Metz, Bernard and Victor Ridder and George Sylvester Viereck, for reply. The Woll-Delafield letter, which will be given to the press, will describe the various activities of the Federation's Committee in this connection, thus marking our public entrance into this situation. So far as I know, ours is the only organization in this or any other country that is undertaking to mediate in this critical controversy, all the others being propaganda bodies on one side or the other.

Of course, the answer to the American Jewish Committee's pamphlet will open the way for the National Socialist Party of Germany to give its whole case. It may be that our committee will decide that the situation has again reached a point where it could appeal, on the one hand, to the American Jewish Congress, to stop the boycott against German goods in this country, and, on the other hand, to the National Socialist Party to lift or at least modify the more drastic restrictions upon the Jews in Germany.

Sincerely yours,

(Signed) RALPH M. EASLEY

This tricky scheme to stop the boycott and give Nazis a chance to blast their publicity against the Jews and the boycott did not materialize, for the Jews, though they did not know that Easley was reporting to Viereck, became somewhat suspicious of Mr. Easley's sudden interest. At this period, too, the patriotic Mr. Easley became intensely interested in disseminating Adolf Ehrt's book, *Communism in Germany*, which, though purporting to be an attack on Communists, is actually filled with cunning anti-semitic

propaganda. Easley worked desperately to get Jews to endorse the book. What Viereck and Easley wanted was a prominent Jew for this and Easley wrote to Morris Waldman, secretary of the American Jewish Committee, sending him a copy of the book and the suggestion that Waldman get Judge Joseph Proskauer of New York to endorse it. The letter, dated October 16, 1933, follows:

Dear Mr. Waldman:

In pursuance of our talk on the telephone, I am sending, for your confidential information, a copy of the book described in the enclosed copy of letter.

At a luncheon today of a committee including General John Ross Delafield and Congressman Hamilton Fish, Jr., both these gentlemen suggested that we ought to ask Judge Proskauer or some other patriotic Jew of prominence to sign with them and others the Foreword herewith inclosed. They said that, as Judge Proskauer and all other members of the conservative Jewish group that he represents are as bitterly opposed to Communism as are they, he might be willing to endorse this.

At any rate, look over this and let me have your reaction tomorrow morning as well as your suggestion as to whether it would be wise to try to get a Jewish co-signer.

(Signed) RALPH M. EASLEY

Waldman read the book. So did Proskauer. Much as they hated Communism, they could not see themselves endorsing a book so obviously anti-semitic, and Proskauer refused. However, the book was here to be distributed and despite the fact that these Jews called Easley's attention to the anti-semitic nature of the book, and flatly refused to endorse it, Easley proceeded to distribute copies wholesale free of charge.

What Easley kept to himself is that *Communism in Germany* had been imported from Germany by George Sylvester Viereck to be used for propaganda purposes. Twenty thousand copies of this book arrived in this country on October

11, 1933, consigned to George Sylvester Viereck, who paid duty on them.

### III

Farmers throughout the country, particularly in the South and the Middle West, are as bewildered by the crumbling of the economic system as the business man and the workers in the mills, mines, and factories of the land. During my survey of the country I found many farmers who, in trying to understand the causes of the depression, placed the blame upon "international Jewish bankers."

There was the Nebraska farmer who expressed the attitude of so many others. I had asked him what he thought caused the depression and he answered promptly:

"I'll tell you. It's the Jews."

"I don't quite understand," I returned. "Your Jewish population in Nebraska is pretty small. How do you blame the loss of your land on the Jews?"

The farmer explained. He had lost his land for non-payment of taxes. The local banker in his community was a friend of his. This banker assured him that he (the banker) did not want to foreclose.

"My banker told me that if he did not foreclose a bigger banker in Chicago would foreclose on him because of pressure from bankers in the East—in New York—who threatened to foreclose on the Chicago banker. And the biggest bankers are Jews!"

He paused, spat a mouthful of chewing tobacco, and looked at me triumphantly.

"Look," he continued. "Who is secretary of the treasury? Morgenthau! A Jew! Who is the Governor of your state? Lehman! A Jew banker! Who is the biggest international banker in the country? Warburg! A Jew!"

"But there are others," I murmured. "Morgan, Rockefeller——"



"They are controlled by the international Jewish bankers," the farmer explained tolerantly. "The Jews have a world-wide conspiracy among themselves to wreck the economic system, capture all the gold in the world through their banking interests, and thus gain supreme control of the whole world——"

What this misguided farmer was telling me was what he had been told by those who had read or heard of the *Protocols of Zion*. The farmer did not know the "Protocols" had been proved to be forgeries. He was not an economist. He did not understand the economic forces which wrecked his prosperity, which caused him to lose his land.

Leaders of farmers, unless they want to advocate the overthrow of the capitalist system, must find reasons to account for the farmers' plight, and many of these leaders seize upon the "international Jew" as an excuse. These leaders wield national power and influence upon many thousands—leaders like Milo Reno of the Farmers' Holiday Association, for instance. Mr. Reno's Congressional supporters, farmers in his organization and liberals who support this farm leader do not know that he has been one of the foremost disseminators of anti-semitic propaganda in the country, his harangues against the Jew profoundly developing hatred of this race.

Reno went through the farming area, particularly in Iowa, telling groups that the Jews were responsible for their troubles. The development of anti-semitism in Iowa, Nebraska and other areas in the mid-west, became so great as a result of this anti-semitic propaganda, that Jews living in that area pleaded with Henry Wallace (now Secretary of Agriculture) to talk to Milo Reno and explain that the Jews were no more responsible than the Chinese.

In the latter part of June, 1933, Wallace and Rabbi Eugene Manheimer of Des Moines met with the Farmers Holiday leader. Milo Reno told them vigorously that "the



Jews invented 'usury' and were consequently responsible for the farmers' troubles." The Jew, Reno insisted, is the author of all the evils that the farmer is suffering from today.

Reno had been working with the anti-semitic organization known as the American Fascists. This organization has another name by which it is more commonly known: The Crusaders for Economic Liberty (or the White Shirts) headed by the eccentric George W. Christians, with headquarters in Chattanooga, Tenn. It has an espionage system of its own directed by C. F. Fulliam of Muscatine, Iowa, and has been intensive in distributing anti-semitic propaganda, working with Nazi agents in the United States.

When Henry Wallace became Secretary of Agriculture he had too much power and influence for Milo Reno to oppose openly. When Wallace called Reno's attention to the results of his "Hate-the-Jew" creed, Reno decided to break away from the White Shirts and their fostering of race hatred. Leon Vanderlyn, Resident Secretary, North-eastern Division of the Farmers Holiday Association, with headquarters at 485 Madison Avenue, New York City, under the name of the Associated Liberal Groups of Greater New York, spoke for Reno in the discussions between the farmers' leader and the head of the White Shirts espionage system.

At the beginning of February, 1934, Fulliam wrote to Vanderlyn, in part:

Do you really know what Fascism is or do you accept what all avenues of publicity in the hands of the enemies of the American people want you to believe? Many organizations and movements are labelled Fascist that are no more than you claim to be. Fascism is modern nationalism. Fascism is not a foreign importation. It is a world idea. It is not even a new creed. It is a new method. Fascism is the modern adaptation of an old creed. It is the creed of all for each and each for all. It is essentially a "spiritual rebirth." An "enlightening." Every Aryan world power today is organizing its own type of Fascism according to

its needs and the psychology of its people. It is the answer of the White Races fighting to maintain their World Supremacy and their Christian culture and civilization to the International Financialism and the International Marxian Communism of the International Jewry which seeks to destroy white supremacy. The entire world is a battleground and International Jewry has no one to blame but themselves for what is happening, for they have industriously for many years been sowing the whirlwind of which they will reap the harvest. Although now in control of America in every walk of life, they must relinquish their control over us and recede from the key positions that they now occupy or suffer the consequence of their own action.

Bearing in mind that the Secretary of Agriculture had warned him about fanning the flames of race and religious hatred in this country, Milo Reno instructed Vanderlyn to break away from this Fascist group. On February 15, 1934, Vanderlyn wrote to Fulliam as follows:

Dear Mr. Fulliam:

I deeply regret that the trend you and Mr. Christians have taken in the last three months must result in the cessation of all cooperation between us. As I told you in the summer of last year, while I agreed with you concerning the international bankers and concerning the necessity of keeping the fundamental tenets of Christianity alive, nevertheless, I thoroughly disapprove of anything smacking of the Hitler method and of Nazi philosophy. The fact that you have distributed German propaganda authorized by a group of downright reactionaries, Hamilton Fish and his crowd, has been the last straw.\*

I am authorized by Milo Reno to inform you that there can be no possible tie-up between the Crusaders for Economic Liberty and the Farmers' Holiday Association. Mr. Reno is of my opinion that the essence of Christianity does not lie in inciting racial and religious prejudice. When the Crusaders made the statement: The Golden Rule instead of the Rule of Gold, they were on the right track. When they changed their

\* (Vanderlyn is referring to the anti-semitic book, *Communism in Germany*, distributed by Ralph M. Easley of the National Civic Federation.)

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name to American Fascists, they alienated the strongest element which could have come to their support, the Farmers Union and the Farmers' Holiday Association.

When our Master threw the Money Changers out of the temple, he did not enter upon a campaign of religious persecution, and the warfare against Wall Street and the Chicago Pit does not imply a campaign of religious intolerance, and the trappings of dictatorships and Hitlerism.

If at any time the Crusaders for Economic Liberty are willing to change their tactics, to abandon the foolish idea of Fascism, and truly preach the Golden Rule, they will find the Farmers' Holiday Association more ready to cooperate with them.

Until then, we must consider ourselves on entirely separate paths.

LEON VANDERLYN,  
Resident Secretary, Northeastern Division,  
Farmers' Holiday Association.

At this period Fulliam was in close touch with Nazi agents in the United States, signing his name in the special letters to these agents with the swastika sign of allegiance to Hitler.

Let me quote a sample letter. It was written on April 24, 1934, and addressed to Reinhold Walter, of the Friends of New Germany, the leading organization disseminating anti-semitic propaganda in the United States. The letter arrived at Walter's home, 805 Fairmount Place, New York City:

Dear Mr. Walter:

A week or so ago I sent you in care of your publication a copy of a statement to the press by the Department of Propaganda, Crusaders for Economic Liberty. If you have printed it would very much appreciate your sending me a copy for my file and reference. Will be glad to remit for a copy of same.

I have followed with great interest the articles in Today magazine about the Nazi activities. I would not worry much about such articles if I were you. Every knock is a boost because you know and I know that they do not tell the truth. I treat all



such that attack the crusader movement with scorn and contempt and am entirely unruffled and unmoved by their ravings.

You can do a great deal for American Liberties and Institutions and trust that I may have the pleasure of hearing from you.

America is awakening. Hail the dawn of a New America.

Yours in the fellowship of Aryan freedom.

(Signed) C. F. FULLIAM

P. S. Enclosed please find copies of three letters I wrote which might interest you. The Jews in America may have frightened a lot of you American citizens of German birth or descent but here is one American citizen with good German blood in his veins who is not ashamed of it. I say what I please and advocate what I please as granted me in my constitutional rights so send some of your New York Jews out here in Iowa and see how far they get in suppressing free speech.

C. F. F.

One of their chief propaganda activities is the dissemination of the discredited *Protocols of Zion*. This attack upon the Jews is mailed out in vast numbers, each copy containing a letter from George W. Christians explaining the need of reading the book and understanding its philosophy.

Christians, ever since he and Fulliam started to work with Nazi propagandists in this country, has gone to extreme measures to show his loyalty to these agents. One of Christians' associates is Oscar C. Pfaus of 1446 W. Edgemont Avenue, Chicago. Pfaus is one of the chief Nazi leaders in Chicago. Besides making his vicious attacks on the Jews wherever he has an opportunity to speak, Pfaus' main Nazi activity in the Middle West has been to try to consolidate the various fascist organizations into one powerful body to carry on these activities from a central headquarters. His "official" job is president of the German Alliance of Chicago.

Pfaus' anti-semitic activities aroused considerable antagonism not only among Jews, but among many gentiles, and the Nazi leader communicated with the head of the Ameri-



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can Fascists complaining of "persecution" by two Jews, Julius Klein and Robert Baum. Not knowing how to get in touch with these two men, despite his espionage system, Christians wrote to the Jewish Telegraph Agency, care of The Jewish Advocate in Boston, Mass., threatening them with Chicago gangsters. This warning was written March 7, 1934:

Gentlemen:

I have been informed that Mr. Oscar C. Pfaus, 1446 Edgemont Avenue, Chicago, Illinois, a German citizen, is being persecuted by underground methods by a pair of rats by the name of Julius Klein and Robert Baum, because of his sympathetic attitude toward the Crusader White Shirts, and his approval of our Economic Liberty program.

Now we are well prepared and perfectly willing, and in fact anxious, for publicity purposes, to defend Mr. Pfaus' rights in an open fight in the courts, but we do not propose to stand for this sneaking, undercover nonsense. If you don't think we mean what we say, just make a few inquiries and find out who is who in the Chicago underworld.

Yours in the fellowship of freedom,

(Signed) GEORGE W. CHRISTIANS,

Commander-in-chief, Crusader White Shirts.

Simultaneously the patriotic Mr. Christians wrote to T. O. Busbee of Tampa, Fla., to "use your underground connections to see that Mr. Pfaus gets the protection that he needs so that we can keep this scrap in the open and get all the publicity possible."

Of course this sounds a little insane, but sane or insane, the intensive propaganda carried on by these fascist leaders is having a profound effect upon the attitude of gentiles toward the Jews and the peace of the country. The anti-semitic activities not only of Fulliam's propaganda department but of Milo Reno before he was told to "lay off" by the Secretary of Agriculture, have fallen on rich soil. In

the business world, the result of this propaganda against the Jews has already reached the stage where word is being quietly passed to take protection away from Jews in such matters for instance, as insurance policies, solely because holders of policies are Jews. Let me illustrate the effect of Milo Reno's and the White Shirts' propaganda in Iowa.

The Iowa Mutual Liability Insurance Company, with its home offices in the Insurance Building, 512 Second Avenue East, Cedar Rapids, wrote to J. Max Goar, manager of the J. Max Goar Insurance Agency, 505 Plymouth Bldg., Minneapolis, Minn., on December 11, 1933, as follows:

Dear Sir:

In re: FCA No. 406108

Our inspection of this risk indicates that the truck covered by this policy is driven by a young man twenty years of age who has the reputation of fast and reckless driving. Although our policy has been in force since May 4th, and we have not been presented with any claims, we cannot help but feel that to continue the policy will sooner or later involve us in a claim because of the driving habits of the chauffeur.

Under the circumstances, we are obliged to issue cancellation of this policy and sincerely trust that you will encounter no difficulty in picking up this policy promptly. If, for any reason, you are unable to secure the return of the policy within the next seven days, notice of cancellation will be directed to the assured from this office.

We might incidentally mention that this risk covered a Jewish assured which our experience has indicated to be undesirable risks and for that reason we would appreciate your assistance in declining further risks for people of this type in view of the unfavorable records.

Appreciating your prompt cooperation and thanking you for acknowledgment of this letter, we are

Very truly yours,

IOWA MUTUAL LIABILITY INSURANCE CO.

(Signed) G. J. STARMAN,

Underwriter.

## XVII. SILVER SHIRTS AMONG THE GOLD

IF the Communist Party cares to earn the undying gratitude of Captain Eugene R. Case, head of the Silver Shirts of California, it could do it by just hating him a little bit. He would really be grateful, for if only Communists would hate him with a deep and bilious hate, he could point out to the "suckers," as he terms his members, what a dangerous guy he is to Communism and thus get more "coconuts," as he quaintly calls the donations received from the aforesaid "suckers."

I had heard a great deal about Silver Shirt activities in Southern California. I had learned, during my stay in the San Joaquin Valley, that fascist groups like vigilante committees were organizing rapidly wherever Communists were active among migratory workers. These vigilante committees, however, were scattered and without a central leadership. The trend towards fascism here was clear and more pronounced than in any other area I had visited, and it is obviously only a question of time before some capable leader unites the scattered groups springing up all over the state with the American Legion and county and state law-enforcing officers into a powerful fascist band.

I had been unable to find anyone who showed possibilities of becoming the fascist leader, but in San Francisco I heard that the Silver Shirts, though not active in northern and central California, were extremely active in the southern part. So I went to Los Angeles to talk to this "leader." An appointment was arranged for me by the printer of the *Silver Ranger*, a four-page, half-pint anti-Communist, anti-

Jew, pro-100 per cent American weekly newspaper issued by the Silver Shirts and peddled for a penny a copy.

At the appointed hour I showed up at the Walker Auditorium, 730 South Grand, the Silver Shirts headquarters. There were several lean, lithe, hundred per cent Americans in the room and one dark-skinned fellow of German ancestry: Dr. E. F. Weber, an official national Silver Shirt lecturer and a "scientific" Jew-and-Communist-hater. During the week I was in Los Angeles, Dr. Weber got \$360 for hating from the public platform.

A large table with a few hate leaflets on it occupied the center of the rather cramped room. Another, and smaller, table near the window held some more hate leaflets. Only one of the men marched around with a sprightly military air and an awe-inspiring vast red "L" emblazoned on his bosom. The "L" looked very serious.

The interview was refreshingly frank. I cannot account for its frankness unless Captain Case's bloodshot eyes offered a clue. Maybe when I saw him he had not quite recovered from a spree of hate and still had his tongue loose. I don't know.

The leader of the Silver Shirts is 33 years old, with thinning hair, bloodshot eyes (at least on this occasion), a rather pleasant Nordic face, and dressed in a fashion comparable only to Jimmy Walker's.

I was immediately ushered into Captain Case's small private office. The printer came along as a witness for both of us so there would be no misquotations.

"Captain," I began, "I should like to ask a lot of questions. Some of them may be personal. Those you wish to answer, I shall take down verbatim, so you will not be misquoted; if you do not wish to answer any of them, please say so. I am sure your not wanting to answer will make just as good a story."



Captain Case laughed pleasantly and rubbed one blood-shot eye. "That's fair enough. Shoot!"

"First, a little information about you. You look like a clean-cut, intelligent sort of person and I'd like to know a little of your background—why a fellow like you takes up with the Silver Shirts."

"Communism must be wiped——"

"We haven't got to that yet, Captain. First about yourself. Where did you get the title 'Captain'?"

"In the 6th Cantonese National Army in China, when I saw service with them in 1922. They paid me \$1,000 a month. I was also a 'Captain' when serving under General Manzas in Mexico in 1929. In Mexico I drew \$35 a day. But the coconuts [money] were more plentiful in China."

Captain Case explained that he had always been a soldier of fortune. He had had military training at the Staunton Military Academy in Virginia, the Croydon Military Academy in England, another in France, and that he had filibustered in Nicaragua, Honduras, and several other places, "some under fake names." He added that he was a first lieutenant in the U. S. Army Reserves, but had never seen service "except in the 131st and 132nd National Guard in Illinois during two strike duties."

When he ceased filibustering, he returned to the United States, owned and ran El Monte Military Academy at El Monte, Cal. This failed because of the depression.

"To summarize it," I said, "you are a soldier of fortune after the coconuts."

"That's right," he agreed amiably. "But not in the Silver Shirts. It's the principle of the thing here——"

"Yes, of course. Now, how much does this principle bring you in?"

"Not a cent," he said triumphantly. "I, as chairman of the executive committee of the Silver Shirts of America in California, had it incorporated so that no one can touch

a nickel of it. Not even Pelley. Pelley ——— [here he used a well-known four-letter word of Aryan extraction] 26 men in California out of plenty of dough. I'm the 27th and I'm ——— him."

The three of us laughed appreciatively.

"Don't you and Pelley work together?"

"He's gotten enough dough out of this racket. Now it's my turn."

"Oh, it's a racket?"

He looked at me disgustedly.

"Certainly not! It's the principle of the thing. Communism——"

"We'll get to that. How many members have you got in California and what's your income?"

"Uh-uh. Can't tell that."

"It's been my experience that when an organization refuses to tell the number of its members and the amount of its income, that both are usually very small. My own inquiries into your affairs leads me to place your total membership at 600."

He grinned. "We ain't got so many," he admitted cheerfully. "We have six posts in Los Angeles and that's our biggest concentration. The posts are divided to play for different types. One plays for the riff-raff; you know, what Communists call the proletarians. Another post plays for the nuts—the kind that go to fortune-tellers and seances. This class is our mainstay—our heaviest contributors at lectures. They sure shell out with the halves."

He chuckled and added: "You know there are more nuts in this part of the world than any place you can name outside of an asylum."

"How do you divide the coconuts after the collection?"

"Half goes to the speaker and half to the organization or the group which advances the money to stage the lecture. But what you didn't give me a chance to tell you is that

my pet post is the military one—this one right here. I want ex-soldiers—about 1,500 of them to form a nucleus, a military body to run Communism out of the country.”

“That’s swell. Is that your sole object?”

“We also want to eliminate the international banker.”

“That’s swell, too. What objection have your members to the international bankers?”

“They haven’t any. They don’t know anything. They got to be taught, see? All they know is that Baruch, Morgan, Rockefeller, and those fellows have all the money. The rich have everything and the poor nothing, so we teach them to bank together and get it back. That’s where our biggest appeal is to the nuts at the meetings. Most of these nuts came down here to retire and spend the rest of their lives in the sunshine. Well, what happened? The depression comes along and wipes out their stocks and bonds and real estate. They know something’s wrong but don’t know what it’s all about, so we tell ’em. They used to go to seances or send their souls flopping up in the sky with the ‘guides’; now they’re down to earth and sore as hell at the international bankers.”

“That’s fine. Now, if half the money goes to the speaker and the other half to the organization, and no one can touch the money in the organization, how do you live?”

He smiled, looked wisely at me and said, “Oh, I have a little money; and there may be people interested in supporting me while I do this work.”

“You get contributions through the mails?”

“Lots of them. Dollar bills. Five-dollar bills——”

“Who opens these letters?”

“I do. No one touches them.”

“And no one knows how much is received as contributions in your noble work?”

He looked at me straight in the eye and grinned.

"I get it," I said when he remained silent. "You don't have to say anything."

"Okay," he smiled.

"What connections have you with other fascist organizations?"

"None. We offered the local authorities our co-operation and it was accepted, verbally, in the event of trouble. The local authorities prefer the American Legion. But I am planning now to bring about a co-operation of the local authorities, the Legion, and the vigilante committees being organized throughout the state so as to form a strong military body to drive out——"

"We'll come to that," I assured him. "Has the Friends of New Germany approached you?"

"Yes, but there's no dough in that," he said disgustedly.

"Didn't they offer anything?"

"No. Just wanted to co-operate. We don't want to co-operate with the Germans or anybody else. The game's young yet. Who knows what's in it? We're packing 1,000 suckers in our hall every meeting and they come across, too. So why mix with the Germans?"

"No sense to that," I agreed sympathetically. "Now, let's get down to Communism. Do you know anything about it?"

"I've read everything about it from *Das Kapital* to the *Daily Worker* and the *Moscow News*," he began glibly. "I get the *Moscow News* regularly. I read every line in the Congressional Investigation into Communism——"

"That's swell, Captain," I interrupted. "But do you know anything about it?"

He looked at me and started to laugh.

"It's a menace——"

"I get you," I said. "It's a menace."

"That's right," he agreed, laughing.

"Now that we've come to the conclusion that you don't



know anything about Communism, let's get down to the Jews. What's your objection to the Jews?"

"Not a God-damned bit," he laughed again. "But you got to get the suckers excited about something. Christ! You can't get a gentile excited about a gentile. You got to give them something to get mad about. It's business. What the hell! The official shirtmaker for the Silver Legion is a Jew. Look!"

He pointed to an advertisement in the *Silver Ranger*:

Milton's Toggery  
official Shirt Maker for  
Silver Legion  
Complete line of  
GENT'S FURNISHINGS  
904 West Second Street  
Phone Madison 3123

Room 663

730 So. Grand Ave.

"Milt knows we got nothing against the Jews. It's just business."

He made an expressive gesture with a finely manicured hand.

"What's all this about Jew money then?"

He became serious and started an oration with more expressive gestures:

"It's not the Jew bankers here or any other place. It's the international banker. He's the one who runs the world——"

"Do you feel any bitterness against local bankers—the small fry?"

"It's the international bankers," he repeated. "Local bankers haven't any sense. But they'll recognize us some day and be God-damned sorry they didn't come to us."

"Just what does that mean?"

"Just what I said."

"You mean you've gone to the local bankers for dough and they wouldn't give it to you, so you're sore?"

"I said exactly what I said."

"Have you any connections with any other fascist groups?"

"None. The American Legion doesn't want to join with us—yet. They're watching us carefully to see which way the wind's blowing, I guess. But this week we're sending out ten organizers into the counties where Communists are active in an effort to line up vigilante committees with us."

"Have you been approached with regard to labor struggles around here?"

"Only during the milk strike."

"What did they offer you?"

A look of deep disgust spread over his features.

"Five dollars a day!" he exclaimed indignantly. "The Silver Shirts are for the underdog, the working man. Huh! I should betray the working man for five dollars a day!"

"How did the rest of your men feel when you turned it down?"

"I told 'em to lay off industrial fights for a while. I wouldn't even touch it for ten dollars a day. There's a lot more in the long run."

As I rose to go I said: "Don't you realize that in giving me an interview Communists and Jews may read it and attack you?"

He smiled shrewdly.

"I want the Communists to hate me," he said hopefully.

"I get it. If the Communists attack you, then you become the big shot, eh? You take it around and say, 'See, the Communists don't give a damn about Pelley. I'm the guy they're afraid of' and that makes you a big shot as a leader against the Communists. Right?"

"Right," he laughed. "We ought to go out and get a couple of drinks."

"Sooner or later, if you last at this racket, you're going

to get involved in some labor fight. What I want to know before I go is what price you'll ask."

"We'll have to wait and see. But you can bet on one thing: we're not betraying the workers for a lousy five dollars a day!"

The brand of fascism which announces itself as such, like the Silver Shirts, Crusader White Shirts, and similar organizations, is too absurd, weak and impotent to be considered. The importance of such organizations lies only in the national trend towards fascism, a trend which cannot be ignored. The rank and file members of these organizations are not racketeers; most of them are honest and earnest citizens who, in their ignorance and bewilderment, seek some way out of the economic maze in which they find themselves. Imbued with a strong sense of patriotism coupled with deep religious feeling, they become easy converts to the mystic nonsense of men like William Dudley Pelley.

The sort of person who makes up the ranks of this avowed fascist organization is well illustrated by the retired Nebraska farmer whom I met in the lobby of my hotel in Los Angeles. He had a kindly face, a rather bulbous, blue-veined nose, false teeth, and hands gnarled by years of struggle with the soil. He was well dressed.

We talked for a few minutes about the difference between Nebraska and southern California weather and then switched to the depression and its causes.

"Well, what do you think is the solution to all this?" I asked.

He had been standing while talking to me. At this question, he dragged a chair near mine, plopped heavily into it, and touched my knee with a fatherly hand.

"I know exactly the solution," he said with great conviction. "Make the government of the United States a great corporation and issue common stock—one share to each

man, woman, and child in the country, so that each one will get equal dividends——”

“Isn’t that the Silver Shirt scheme?” I interrupted.

“Yes, sir, that’s the Silver Shirt scheme,” he beamed. “I’m a member of this God-given——”

“What I don’t understand about it is the claim Pelley makes of having talked with God.”

“Why, there’s nothing puzzling about that,” he explained earnestly. “Pelley went to heaven and talked with God for a full seven minutes. He tells about it in his books.”

“And is it true that this form of government which Pelley wants, the ‘Christ Government,’ as he calls it, existed in Atlantis 300,000 years ago and that everybody’s suppressing information about it?”

“Well,” the farmer began judiciously, “when”—he mentioned a Greek sounding name which I did not get—“flew over to America, it was about 12,000 years ago.”

“In an airplane?”

“Yes, sir! Why, they had better airplanes then than they have now. It made 400 miles an hour.”

“Did they use Sinclair oil?” I couldn’t resist asking.

“I really don’t know what they used. But it may have been Sinclair oil that Sinclair produced in some other incarnation.”

“And Atlantis——”

“I think you’re wrong about the system existing 300,000 years ago because Atlantis sunk 850,000 years ago. I saw it sink.”

I got up.

“Excuse me,” I said. “I must make a telephone call.”

You never would have suspected that this nice old gent was stark, staring, raving mad. And he’s loose—and there are thousands of them throughout the country.



## XVIII. THE REAL AMERICAN FASCISM

THE development of a real fascist movement in this country is not coming through racketeers and its membership will not consist chiefly of the unbalanced portion of our population. From all indications, it will be neither like the Italian or German brand but like the vigilante committees in California.

The federal government, since the NRA, has already shown distinct fascist tendencies which have been only dimly observed; and as the economic crisis deepens and political leaders find it more and more difficult to placate both capital and labor, these tendencies will become more pronounced if not openly avowed.

The American worker does not know what fascism is, does not see its tendencies, and cares little about it except when it interferes with his immediate desires. The average man on the street does not like the notion of a dictator. He feels that a dictator will interfere with his individual liberty; but, in their despairing need for food, there are many who have reached the point where they do not care whether it comes from capitalism, a dictator, a Communist, or a Hottentot.

In Charlotte, as in other cities, I asked workers:

"Is there any sentiment here towards a workers' control of industry; that is, the workers take over the industry and run it themselves so they will not be out of work all the time?"

Blank stares met my query.

"No, sir, ain't heard a person talk about that at all. You see, what happens here when the workers want to do some-

thing is the mill-owners close the mills and tell us to go to hell."

"How would you like to see the government run the mills, appoint a dictator over everything?"

"I don't approve of that," one old man broke in. "If we had a dictator it would be just like living under a King and Queen."

"I'd rather live under a dictator than on charity," said another.

Labor leaders, especially among the conservative unions, show a distinct drift towards approving a dictatorship in their industries. John Murphy, president of the Brotherhood of Shoe and Allied Craftsmen in Brockton, is an excellent example of the attitude many union leaders are developing.

"I'm in favor of this system," he told me, "and in competent people being rewarded. A man who has made a million has shown himself to be competent." He laughed and added: "Maybe I'm in favor of it because some day I may want a crack at a million myself."

"Just what does your union want?" I asked.

"Our immediate object is an American standard of living. The worker is satisfied to let the manufacturer run his industries so long as he gets good wages."

"What do you think caused this depression?"

"Unequal distribution of wealth. That's where the trouble lies."

"How would you solve that?"

"If the government doesn't take it away from those who have it, some other organization will. People profiting from this system don't realize that it's broken down. The next thing we have to face is Communism—not the Russian type but an American type—a sort of industrial democracy. I'm in favor of all industry being government-regulated. And I don't mean Socialism. We're beyond Socialism.

"What I have in mind is a sort of cross between Com-

munism and Fascism—a benevolent dictatorship over industry picked by manufacturer, worker-representative, and consumer, with the government standing on the side lines to straighten out difficulties which may arise.

“I’m not in favor of Socialism because it destroys initiative, but I think taxation of wealth ought to be arranged so that a man who has made a million be stopped from making more. He has all he needs for himself and his children. Then the government should draft that sort of man and put him to work for the public good. He has shown his ability by making a million.

“I do not believe in complete redistribution of wealth nor do I see any tendencies for worker-control of industry. There is no leaning in that direction at all. There is a tendency, though, towards a benevolent dictatorship. We see it in Washington and see it even in shop committees.”

In some sections, as in the Oklahoma oil fields, labor leaders with strong fascist tendencies are used by employers to repress signs of militancy among the workers. The cry of patriotism always precedes the building of a nationalistic feeling. Whenever confronted by extreme restlessness within the rank and file, due to the conservatism of the leadership, American Federation of Labor officials appeal to patriotism and hurl accusations of “red,” which is supposed to express an alien theory, to keep the restless workers in line.

In Tulsa, Wildcat Williams, the A. F. of L. organizer for the Oil Fields, Gas Wells and Refinery Workers of America, acted for the employers and business men when unemployed workers, chaffing under starvation charity allowances, threatened to seize warehouses containing food supplies. The terrified “leading citizens” asked Wildcat “to keep them down,” as he expressed it. He succeeded by turning their restless energies into different channels and, from a fund placed at his disposal by the business men, in feeding them.

The common belief that the American Legion is the great

upholder of patriotism in this country is not quite accurate. The credit for that must go to American Federation of Labor officials and organizers, and their motives are not solely patriotic. Unable to keep their restless membership from revolt by achieving things for them, the leaders appeal to the workers' patriotism. When that does not seem to keep the hungry from still demanding food and union protection, the appeal is followed by threats backed by a pistol, as in Oklahoma, or the actual killing of union men, as in the Southern Illinois coal fields, where the United Mine Workers of America is trying to force rebellious members into the mines.

So far as business leaders are concerned, their bewildered efforts to adjust themselves to the changing scene show a distinct trend to accepting industrial dictatorship; and economic dictatorship means inevitable political dictatorship. The swift march of events in recent years has left them breathless and somewhat dizzy. As one textile man told me in Charlotte.

"Our national habits of life have been turned upside down, and we're trying to catch our breath. In the old days, you were told to work hard and save your money. Now we're told not to work hard and to spend our money. It's beyond me. I can't figure it out.

"We used to be individualists. We used to handle our own problems. Now we pass them on to the government and most of us seem to like it. A centralized government control has been forced on industry whether it likes it or not. Some think it's a good thing and many others don't. We've got a dictatorship over industry now. Maybe we're heading for a greater dictatorship. Who knows?"

And in the Northwest woods, J. McClelland, one of Washington's Commission of Nine, appointed to plan for the state's future, said:

"The lumber industry prefers a dictatorship of its own,



established by itself to govern production. It does not want government interference and resents it a great deal. Just before the NRA went into effect, lumber was trying to work out a czar over its own industry, and business conditions were improving until the code came and allocated production. This resulted in a definite drop in business here."

A moment or two after McClelland told me of the lumber industry's plan for a czar, he added almost in the same breath, "There is no tendency towards fascism in the industrial areas around here. In the fruit and vegetable areas, especially where there is a Finnish element, Communism is rampant, with nothing to counteract it except vigilante groups. There we keep the Communists under control."

The tendency by business to accept a dictatorship both from the government and from its own industrial leaders, its accusation that the workers who ask for more bread are affected by alien doctrines, must be considered as fascist trends. When economic conditions become more acute these accusations by the employing class will inevitably assume open hostility, with the tacit approval of the duly constituted legal authorities, as in the West Coast agricultural belt. There the American brand of fascism has already taken distinct form as an extra-legal body using patriotism as a smoke screen, which works for the interests of employers to do what the legal authorities dare not, as yet, undertake.

In 1932-33, when the Cannery and Agricultural Workers Union became active among the migratory workers of California, the employers were caught unaware and lost strike after strike. In desperate efforts to keep out organizers, local farmers, aided by business men and the American Legion, formed Vigilante Committees which undertook to drive out the organizers—an activity the legal authorities could not undertake. On many of these committees are found police and prosecuting attorneys—acting as individual citizens instead of as representatives of the law. Their activities are

purely "patriotic," for the organizers are Communists seeking to overthrow the government by getting migratory workers 21 cents a hamper instead of 17 cents.

The Vigilante Committee idea spread rapidly. In some areas, they were organized months in advance in preparation for possible organizational activity during the harvesting season. Though they were active in suppressing organizing work, they were comparatively weak because they were confined to their own counties. They did not cross county boundaries.

The Committees in Imperial Valley took the first step towards the building of a strong fascist organization based on economic alignment instead of county interests. The four vigilante committees which had been most active merged to form the Imperial Valley Anti-Communist Association, with headquarters in Brawley. Their initial membership was announced as 3,000. Here we see the clear development of a fascist body, one which has armed and taken to itself in an extra-legal fashion the power of the county and the state. Organizations like the American Legion, Silver Shirts, and Red Squads participate in Vigilante Committee activities, but in a subsidiary way. The real leaders in command are the farmers, who feel that their economic security is at stake and are willing to fight for it.

The formation of fascist groups is inevitable with the growth of Communist activities. Economic events produce political events whether in a California grape area, an Oregon pea region, or an Alabama industrial center. Due legal processes are bound legally to protect organizers, something which the controlling element that places law officers in power does not want. For the law to take extra-legal steps would force the state to preserve the "integrity" of the law and the Constitution by taking, or pretending to take, steps to counteract such measures. But the formation of an extra-legal body, like a vigilante committee, accomplishes the de-

sired end and saves the law from showing its position too openly as a class instrument.

This is why I found the law not only closing its eyes to vigilantes but, in every area, almost openly co-operating with them. The legal arm of the county, except in emergencies, openly confines itself to "legal steps," such as passing statutes prohibiting meetings, even though these statutes are patently unconstitutional. Since legal measures can be met by legal measures and a drawn-out battle can be waged by injunctions, trials, and postponements, legal measures did not fill the need of fruit- and vegetable-growers for quick action. Hence, the formation of these fascist groups in the present stage of our economic development.

It is obvious, from the merging of the scattered Imperial Valley vigilante committees, that it is only a matter of time before the various anti-Communist associations, now separated by valleys, as the original vigilantes were separated by counties, will merge into one powerful, armed fascist body which even the state will have to consider.

The class alignment in the development of the fascist bodies is seen in the attitude taken by the organs of public opinion, representing the employing class. These took sides immediately with an intensive publicity campaign urging the formation of vigilante committees to combat Communist organizational activities as a "patriotic necessity," a campaign still going on.

One of the chief reasons why the Communist-led Cannery and Agricultural Workers' Union was able to make the progress it did in organizing the migratory workers and winning the sympathetic ears of conservative labor like the A. F. of L. membership, was the virtual absence of any high-pressure anti-red campaign on the West Coast. People were not scared by the words "red" or "Communist." So far as the migratory workers were concerned, they did not care who organized them; what they wanted was a little



better living and working conditions, and if Communists could help them get it, then they would be with the Communists. The winning of a very high percentage of strikes led by Communists added to their prestige not only among migratory workers but among conservative labor, and Communists began to make slight inroads into the A. F. of L. bodies.

The employing class, realizing that the absence of anti-red sentiment was partly responsible for Communist successes, is now trying to make up for lost time. The campaign started at first in the small newspapers, in areas affected by strikes, but as strike after strike was won by the Agricultural Workers Union, the newspapers became frantic. The Los Angeles *Times* led the publicity onslaught on a state-wide scale. The Hearst newspapers, which had always assumed a "liberal" attitude on the coast, when confronted with actual Communist advances, forgot about the Yellow Peril and fell in line. Small local dailies, semi-weeklies, and weeklies, in counties where Communist organizers were active, started whooping it up. Today, not only are the newspapers filled with news, real and fancied, of Communist activities, but the radio, too, has been utilized.

I was riding in a taxi in San Francisco when I turned on the radio. I heard:

"The authorities are taking precautions against Communist——"

In Fresno, while I was eating in a restaurant, the radio blared forth:

"Communist organizers have descended upon the San Joaquin Valley. . . ."

In Los Angeles, in the lobby of my hotel, at one o'clock in the morning:

"Fortunately the meeting which the Communists organized did not result in the expected riot, due to the precautions taken by the police. . . ."



With my morning coffee, the Los Angeles *Times* screamed:

"Valley Forms Organization to Oust Reds."

I turned to the *Times* editorial page. The leading editorial was "Repelling the Reds."

No one had ever cared about the 100,000 migratory workers in California. Disorganized, poverty-stricken, helpless, they had wandered from crop to crop, living on what the fruit- and vegetable-growers threw their way. Under Communist leadership, they were demanding wage increases—and getting them—and the whole machinery of the state and the sources of public opinion were thrown into the fight against them and their militant leaders.

I found that people are taking this whooped-up red scare with several grains of salt. They know that Communists have won strikes and that the migratory element lives and works under incredible conditions, and they are a little suspicious about the sudden patriotic frenzy by the press, radio, and public officials. The anti-red feeling which I found in the industrial areas in the east is the result of years of anti-red propaganda. The present efforts to flood California with an over-night red-baiting frenzy is not meeting with much success. The people are disillusioned about what the papers tell them; they cannot forget the "prosperity-just-around-the-corner" gags nor the patriotism and promises during the World War and how the returned soldiers are now living off charity.

Because of the people's very indifference to the anti-red propaganda, the newspapers are becoming more bitter. It is interesting to see a typical editorial about the Reds and I quote one from the Los Angeles *Times*. It not only urges the formation of fascist groups, but the last paragraph boldly hints that the use of force would not be a bad way to drive out the Communists.

Says the editorial:

"Formation of the Imperial Valley Anti-Communist Association to repel and combat the Red invasion is, in view of the Communist threat that not a car of cantaloupes will be allowed to be shipped this season, very timely. The inroads of Communist agitators among the Mexican laborers are believed to have been checkmated by action of the Mexican consul; but full precautions should nevertheless be taken to guard against agitation and agitators.

"The Imperial Valley Anti-Communists have somewhere between 3,000 and 10,000 members, expecting to reach the latter strength by next week, and it is to be hoped that they do. It must not be forgotten that the Communist drive is not a labor disturbance but the genesis of a revolution; it is not improved wages, hours and working conditions which are the ends sought, but the overturn of the government and that from a Communist standpoint it is better to lose strikes than to win them, since to lose a strike promotes discontent and bitterness. The workers who are dupes of the agitators do not understand this, nor is it explained to them. For this reason, defensive organizations against Communist agitators is absolutely necessary.

"The San Joaquin Valley folk, who were plagued with the Communists last summer, and the Valencia orange growers, likely to have a similar affliction soon if steps are not taken to prevent it, will do well to form similar defensive organizations.

"The action that is needed is to get rid of the Reds in the most expeditious manner. Disputes as to wages, hours and working conditions can be compromised. No compromise with Communism is possible."

In the news columns, all anti-Communist activities by state, county, or the vigilante committees are chronicled with big headlines, especially the current tendency to pass local

ordinances prohibiting meetings, ordinances admittedly designed to stop organizational activities.

As an illustration, both of the way news is presented and exactly what these ordinances prohibit, I quote one story from a San José paper:

"Santa Clara County orchardists today were armed with legal weapons to combat recurrences this year of Communist agitation, striking and rioting in Valley fruit orchards, which were a feature of last year's pear harvest.

"Two county ordinances, one regulating the holding of parades and processions on any public highway, sidewalk or alley in the unincorporated area of the county, and the other regulating the establishment of camps on county ranch properties outside the incorporated limits of cities and towns, were adopted by the board of supervisors.

"The ordinances were prepared with the cooperation of the Santa Clara County Pear Growers' Association.

"The first ordinance makes it unlawful for any person or groups of persons to sit, loiter or stand on public highways, alleys, sidewalks or cross walks in the unincorporated areas of the county so as to obstruct free passage of persons or vehicles or to create an annoyance.

"It further provides that it is unlawful for any persons or groups of persons to obstruct the passage in any church, hall or theatre entrance, or any other place of public assembly.

"To hold a parade, procession, musical program, address or debate in any public place or park or on a public highway in the unincorporated county areas, a permit must first be obtained from the board of supervisors.

"The second ordinance provides that it is unlawful outside the corporate limits of a city or town to operate a camp in the area of one acre housing ten or more persons, or two or more families, living in or occupying autos, vehicles, camp wagons, tents, temporary buildings, or any other types of temporary shelter, or without shelter. These provisions do

not apply to the operation of auto camps licensed under the state law.

"The only way in which such camps may be operated under this ordinance is by the issuance of a permit by the board of supervisors to an applicant who submits, in addition to his application, a certificate signed by three or more reputable citizens attesting to his good moral character.

"Violation of either ordinance is punishable by a fine of \$500 or 6 months in Jail."



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## AMERICA FACES THE BARRICADES

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### XIX. BITTER UNREST

THERE is a cat's head painted on the plate-glass window at 409 East Second Street in Tulsa, Oklahoma, and over it in large red and yellow letters the legend "Wildcat." This is the headquarters of Wildcat Williams, East Texas college man, correspondence-school lawyer, chemist, and gunman.

From what I had heard of Wildcat, the crude painting of the cat's head fascinated me. It was supposed to represent the aggressiveness and ferocity of the man behind the plate-glass window; actually, the cat looked singularly like my own when frightened by the appearance of a pint-sized dog—though it hurts me to say that of the Spivak cat!

I found Wildcat Williams at a rough wooden table piled high with American Federation of Labor leaflets. The room was painted a deep green and its walls and ceiling were pretty thoroughly perforated with bullet holes.

Wildcat is his real name. He was christened Marlin, but his mother, since the boy was one-fourth Cherokee Indian, insisted upon Wildcat for a middle name. As the boy grew up, he dropped the Marlin.

Seventy per cent of Tulsa's life depends upon oil. The life of the whole state depends upon the petroleum industry.

During the boom days, quite a few years ago, the oil workers were well organized, but under American Federation of Labor leadership the union gradually disintegrated. By the time the depression came along there were fewer than 1,000 union members in every branch of the state's oil industry.

The speed-up and the usual cutting of wages was inaugurated by the companies. Workers did not protest because they were demoralized and fearful of being fired, for between 35 and 60 per cent (depending upon the section) of the 100,000 oil workers in the state were dropped from the payrolls during recent years. The oil workers were too beaten, too oppressed, to do anything except murmur under their breath. They were terrified to try organizational protest, because most oil workers live in company-owned houses without paying rent, and if they became too loud in their protests they would be put out on the roads.

It was the middle class which made the first move, those fairly well-to-do workers in the higher branches of industry, and the small business man. These saw their homes going for non-payment of taxes. They called meetings to protest and once marched on the sheriff's office with blood in their eyes.

It is not so long ago when Oklahoma was a wild and untrammelled territory, the happy hunting ground of bad men. A good many now respectable citizens can trace their ancestry back to men who, only the other day, narrowly avoided dancing gaily in mid-air. Guns and shootings were part of the territory's routine and in the memory of many a middle-aged man, the gun was the law. In their desperation, the property-owners reverted to early traditions. They talked of defending their own and one another's homes with the gun if the sheriff kept auctioning them off. The sheriff and the judges knew these men were not the type who confined themselves to mere talk, and dates to auction off homes were set

so far back on the calendars that many of them were forgotten.

This action by the respectable middle class stimulated the unemployed, who also had a pretty ancestry. Having no homes to defend but plenty of hunger in their families, they talked of seizing warehouses, food stores, clothing stores. At first this was discounted as just talk, a letting-off of steam, but the talk developed into plans. When leading financial and political lights in Tulsa learned that only days separated the unemployed from seizing the town they became frantic and sent for Wildcat Williams.

Wildcat had been a sort of town character since he came back from the war. He had opened a law office and closed it. He worked in a refinery and finally opened one of his own, but business conditions ruined him. During these years he had assiduously developed the reputation of being a gunman. He liked to pack a .38 Smith and Wesson; it may have been memories of old days or it may have been an earnest desire to prove his Indian blood. No one knows.

The leading citizens suggested that he organize the unemployed and keep them from seizing the city. With this much clear, let's step into Wildcat's bullet-punctured office and have a little chat with him:

"Yes, sir!" he greeted me with a broad and rather pleasant smile. "Sit right down. Make yourself comfortable."

I couldn't help but notice the brown-leather holster in his hip pocket and the pistol butt sticking out.

"I understand you kept this town from a rebellion."

Wildcat grinned.

"Well," he began modestly. "I was employed by leading citizens to keep down riots, so I started the unemployed racket before some of the reds got to them and caused a lot of trouble. The leading citizens were pretty much worried. No one will ever know how close we were to armed

rebellion except those of us who used to meet and confer on plans to keep them down."

"What did you get for this?" I asked.

"Oh, I didn't get any salary. I just drew what I needed. If I needed \$100 or \$200 I'd just ask for it and hell, were they glad to give it to me! I must have drawn about \$4,000 in cash, I guess. I never did keep track of how much. But we kept the unemployed from getting out of hand all right."

Since his activity in "keeping the unemployed from getting out of hand," the American Federation of Labor gave him the full-time job of representing the International Association of Oil Field, Gas Well and Refinery Workers of America.

"I speak for Mr. Green," he says proudly, twirling the blue pistol dexterously on a forefinger, "and also for the oil-field workers and we're organizing them fast. We got to organize them if we're going to keep them down—keep them from getting out of hand and going haywire.

"You see, there's one thing about these oil workers. Just organizing them ain't nothing. If you don't give them something to fight about they'll get out of hand and turn radical, so as soon as we organize them we maneuver them into a fight with storekeepers or somebody else and that keeps them occupied; otherwise they'd go haywire on us."

"Just what is your job here?"

"I'm organizer for the oil workers, sheriff, and dollar-a-year man for the city hall. But the workers are organizing themselves and applying for charters, so most of my job is keeping down riots when the unemployed get hot and bothered."

"I see."

"Now don't get me wrong about this unemployed racket though," he said quickly. "I'm for the Stars and Stripes. I'm patriotic, I am. I just had to organize the unemployed be-



cause they were about ready to break loose and take things themselves.

"Why some of these unemployed, before federal relief came, actually had detailed plans as to what section of the city each group was to take. They planned to take this wholesale house and that wholesale house, this store and that store—food, clothes, shoes, you know.

"I tell you it was serious here and the city officials and oil men were pretty white around the gills. They were scared, because this is a tough country and if these oil workers ever started, no telling where they'd finish. That's when they employed me to organize the unemployed racket and keep them down. They told me to spend whatever I needed and I just arranged things to keep them busy—putting them to work cutting wood, farming—anything to separate them and keep their minds off rioting."

"What did you do first?"

"I called a meeting and when I got them all together I told them we had to do something about this starvation business——"

He broke off to grin affably.

"Then I told them that I'd get them work and food and we'd all pull together. Some of the reds in the mob got tough so I pulled my gun and fired a few shots and told them I was running things and from now on I was in charge."

"Didn't any of them object?"

"Oh, sure. Some of the radicals would come in here all hot and bothered with a delegation asking for this and for that, and I'd listen till I got tired of it. Then I'd pull my gun and fire a couple of shots over their heads—like this!"

The blue pistol flashed in my direction and two terrific detonations shattered the quietness of the office. An acrid smell of powder filled the room. I turned to look at the wall

behind me but I couldn't tell which were the two new bullet holes. The wall was a sieve.

"And what happened when you fired the shots?"

"They'd scatter," he laughed. "Scared. I just run 'em out. I'd fire a couple of shots and say I'd heard enough."

"Did you ever shoot anyone?"

"I was in two shooting scrapes, but no one got hurt. They were with the reds when they got a little tough. But I've been in seventy-eight pistol whippings—you know, you hit 'em on the head with the muzzle of the gun."

He demonstrated upon a shadowy adversary.

"How many did you say? Seventeen?"

"Seventeen!" he cried indignantly. "Seventy-eight!"

So far, however, he has apparently kept the oil workers pretty well terrified with his gun play, despite the widespread discontent at the union's inactivity. But the workers with whom I talked are restless. There is a growing insistence that at least oil-code provisions be enforced, a matter which the union ignores.

I talked with a number of refinery workers, tall, strapping, serious-faced hundred per cent native Americans.

"How's Wildcat?" I asked. "I understand he helped a lot in organizing the unemployed last year."

They glanced at one another, hesitant about talking to a stranger. Finally one said:

"You want to know about Wildcat? Well, I'll tell you what I think of him, and I think they'll agree with me."

He nodded towards his companions.

He told me—in very simple but unquotable language.

"That's what we think of him. We wanted to call a strike several times because of the speed-up and he's always stopped it by saying the union's got to stick to its contract. We never made no contract. The government made it. We're living up to it, but the companies ain't. And he says that if we strike we're fighting the government, not the refinery."

"If you think that of him why don't you change organizers?"

"How? We didn't appoint him. The big shots in Washington appointed him and they pay as much attention to us as he does and if we holler too much they call us red."

"Looks like you're not getting much out of your union. Why don't you join another, then?"

"What other one? The only other bunch trying to organize oil and refinery workers are the radicals and we don't want to get mixed up with them."

"Why not?"

They thought for a moment and shook their heads.

"I don't know. Just because they're reds, I guess."

"What are reds?"

"Communists. Bolsheviks. You know," he said surprisedly.

"What's the objection to them? Are they running the unions like Wildcat or are the members running them?"

"I don't know how they run their locals. They haven't any in town, anyway. But, mister, you can't join up with no red outfits."

"Why?"

They had no answer. There was just a feeling that "you can't join up with no red organization." There was no reason but they did know that their organization was not doing anything for them; they were bitter about it but knew of no other place to turn except to the "red union" and this they did not want.

I found this bitterness against their leaders in every area where the workers were organized but were getting no benefits from their united strength. Their inability to earn enough to live on have turned many A. F. of L. members against their conservative leadership. The workers are usually kept in check by appeals to patriotism. I haven't heard so much talk about patriotism in years as I heard in the oil fields. The A. F. of L. organizer, instead of permitting wages

to become an issue, deflects it into a "patriotic" channel. Workers who protest too vehemently against abuses and insist that their local and international union do something about them are immediately squelched by being called "radical" or "Communist." And, in a large measure, sentiment among the union members seems to turn against one who is dubbed a "radical." Such is the psychology of the oil worker, that though he wouldn't hesitate two minutes about taking a gun and seizing a warehouse, he fears the accusation of being a "Communist" or the allegation that he is not patriotic.

"I ain't no Communist," one red-faced, leathery-skinned oil worker said to me. "Wildcat just throws that around whenever we ask that the union do something. What the hell have we got a union for anyway?"

"Suppose the union doesn't do anything?"

"Then we'll do something. I'm getting tired of Wildcat pulling the patriotism bunk on us—and so are a lot of other oil workers. We're plenty patriotic, but we got a right to get what the President says we're supposed to get. Hell, Wildcat never even organized us. We organized ourselves and asked them to charter us. All they're doing is collecting dues and telling us to be patient."

"If they're not doing anything isn't there some other oil-workers' union that wants to do something?"

"Yes, there's a fighting bunch of Communists in Seminole, but I don't want to hook up with them. They want to start trouble and overthrow the government."

"You were ready to start something yourself before federal aid came, weren't you? You were among those who did a lot of talking about seizing food warehouses."

"Yeah, but that wasn't overthrowing the government. That was just getting something to eat when the government wouldn't do nothing for us."

In New England, there is a smouldering bitterness which



is shared somewhat even by the manufacturers. There the unrest is mixed with a prayerful hope that somehow, something will turn up which will pull them out of the depression. The bitterness has not reached the stage of open threats; faith in the existing form of government is still strong and a belief that politics can somehow get them out of the depression is still widespread.

In areas like the soft-coal fields in Illinois, wage scales, earnings, and union difficulties are contributing their irritations to an already irritated people. In this field, the coal-digger works an average of two days a week, which brings him in \$10. It is impossible for a family to live on this, so many are driven to charity. The bitterness became so apparent that concessions were granted to ease their lot and quiet their unrest. Rent was not asked for and of those who could not pay taxes on their homes, foreclosures for non-payment were indefinitely postponed. This enabled local politicians, when the miners grew restless, to point out that the government is good, that no one bothers them when they are unable to pay their taxes, and the miners themselves frequently use this very argument in opposing militant organizers.

Failure of the conservative unions to enforce the wage-scale agreements where the mines are operating is a great source of the seething discontent, yet neither the U. M. W. of A. nor the Progressives dare to fight the present trend to reduce even the agreed-upon wage scale. With conditions in the soft-coal industry what they are, the leaders fear that the mines will close down completely. Never, until recent years, have Illinois operators dared to try schemes to violate wage-scale agreements, such as the mine in West Frankfort, Ill., working under a U. M. W. of A. agreement, which pays the miners 60 per cent of their wages in cash and the balance in credit for purchases at a company store where prices were from 20 to 30 per cent higher than in an independent store.

In another mine in Johnston City, Ill., the 500 men working are paid in scrip, the miners receiving little aluminum checks which they trade in like money in the company store. In a mine in Benton, Ill., where some 150 men work, the miners receive approximately \$1 a day and the rest in promissory notes of coal orders. All of these mines are working under U. M. W. of A. agreements.

In Saline County, where miners work under Progressive contracts, the men get \$4.50 a day instead of the \$5 the wage scale calls for. At Pickneyville, Ill., 250 Progressive miners work on a \$4-a-day scale because of a \$1 bond system. The miner, upon appearing for work, has to buy a dollar bond. If he does not, he gets no car to load.

Just how many miners are working at wage scales lower than the agreement calls for I do not know. Leaders of both unions try to hide these violations, but their continued existence is destroying what little faith the miners still have in their unions and is adding to the ominous unrest.

In the anthracite area, around Wilkes Barre, not only do unemployment, destitution and charity enter the picture, but the growth of sweatshops for the miners' wives and daughters.

"If federal funds had not come in I don't know what would have happened here," said Henry M. Carey, executive director of the Community Welfare Federation, Wyoming Valley. "We would probably have had a chaotic condition, for we had a very serious unemployment situation which at times threatened to result in riots. There was considerable talk of seizing things and the authorities were quite disturbed."

Though the miners' basic wage scale is comparatively high, the actual earnings over a yearly period, due to the nature of the industry and its seasonal requirements, is seldom sufficient to keep a family alive.

"Sure," said one miner to me, "when we draw pay it's pretty high, but we don't draw no pay."

Every place where the restlessness of the destitute reached the stage of threatened open rebellion, everyone conceded that the CWA and government relief stopped a growing sentiment which might easily have become unmanageable even with all the forces of the state. In Omaha, where labor is exceedingly conservative, a banker told me seriously:

"The CWA probably saved the country from a revolution. Our people took the early years of depression stoically with no sign of too much restlessness. But as the years went on and the charity allowances dwindled I thought surely that we'd have riots. Why," he said with a wave of his hand, "we actually starved them for almost a year—and they liked it!"

There was a note of disgust in his voice.

In the vast cattle areas, there is a vague unrest but it is not directed against anything in particular. Many ranchers, unable to make even their operating expenses, due to the drop in cattle prices, started milking a great many cows, with the result that vast quantities of milk were thrown on the market and milk prices dropped. The market value of products fell with such sickening rapidity that it did not pay to ship them in the face of stationary interest and freight rates. These latter were controlled by big banking and railroad interests with powerful lobbies in Washington, and the realization of this only added to the farmers' and ranchers' bitterness.

Much of the restlessness came from the younger generation—sons and daughters of cattlemen just out of the colleges. These youngsters came out ambitious, determined to make a place for themselves in the sun, and found themselves unable even to get a job. Many who had had well-to-do fathers now had to seek work on some government relief job, and it irritated and angered them.

After talking to many of them I felt that in their bitterness they would strike furiously if only they knew at what to strike. They had no clear idea of what was going on, and no policy to follow. They had learned everything at school except what made this economic world of ours so insane. They see that the economics they studied—all the old standard things they were taught—somehow does not offer a solution to the bog the country is in, and in their bewilderment they seethe with an ever-growing bitterness.



## XX. THREATS OF REVOLUTION

A BIG man, with a booming voice and a ready smile for everyone, got on the train at Meridian, Miss. When he passed my seat in the smoker he greeted me with a loud and genial "Hi!"

I put him down mentally as a politician. Subsequently, in a long talk we had while he munched apples, I found that I was right. He was Marion W. Reily, a Meridian lawyer who had once almost been elected governor of the state.

Reily, as the trial lawyer of his firm, is constantly traveling about Mississippi. We talked of workers, farmers, business men—what happened to them since the depression, how they felt, what they thought, what he, as one of the leaders in the state, felt and thought.

"Just as long as the government keeps pouring money into the state, they're going to keep taking charity," he said. "But it's not this willingness to take charity that's bothering me so much as everybody talking about imposing higher personal taxes. What scares me is when you get a man like my partner who has more money than I have saying that the government ought to redistribute the wealth of the country. He says it is right, morally and legally, for a government whose people are starving, to confiscate part or all of the wealth now in the hands of a few. You'd be surprised how many people are talking like that now, substantial citizens, too, who are ready to have their own money taxed heavily if the same is done to the huge fortunes.

"They think the whole cause of the depression is the concentration of wealth in the hands of a few. There's a good deal of unrest in this state and a lot of sentiment against

the rich. They feel that the government has not only allowed, but helped the rich to get richer at the expense of the poor. And feeling the way they do, I tell you I'm afraid to think of what might happen in the future.

"Take Meridian, for instance. More of an industrial town because of the railroad shops. It's always been a strong union place and you'd expect that sort of talk, but now you find it in the farming areas. These union men were pretty conservative, but you know what happened? They and a lot of unemployed organized themselves and demanded that government funds be turned over to them for distribution instead of to public officials. Labor now wants somebody of their own picking to handle everything. They don't trust the men in public office any more."

Reily thinks the solution to the depression is to put men back to work on the land where they can grow their own food.

"If everybody works the land and grows his own vegetables they'll have enough to eat."

"How will they get money for clothes and taxes?"

"Sell their produce."

"To whom—if everybody works the land?"

He shrugged his shoulders.

"It's beyond me," he said finally. "What do you think?"

The puzzled politician left the train at Jackson. A few miles out of the city a farmer got on, an unshaved fellow with a red face and hands hardened by long years of toil. From the window we glimpsed groups of Negroes or whites half hidden by swirls of smoke rising from their burning fields.

"What are they doing?" I asked.

"Burning trash. Gettin' ready for plowin'. They got to burn last year's trash because one-horse plows don't dig enough to plow everything under."

"You own your own land?"

"No, sir. I'm a tenant farmer. Share-cropper, some calls it."

"Things any better for you now the government's paying the farmer not to plow all of his land?"

He looked at me steadily for a moment.

"Better? The gov'ment ain't givin' the tenant farmer nothin'. Only one's gettin' anything out o' all this here gov'ment money is the landowner. The gov'ment ain't worryin' about the 'half-hands.' That's what share-croppers are called, you know. I'm worse off now than I was before the gov'ment began to spend money because the gov'ment paid the landowner not to plow so much. Me an' my family ain't gettin' advances no more, either. The boss says he can't afford it an' anyway, I kin go to the Red Cross an' get me some food an' clothes."

"What did you used to get in advances?"

"Before things got pretty bad I used to get about twelve dollars between March and August—that was for my whole family. But since things got bad, I ain't gettin' nothin'. I have to get me a sack o' flour from the Red Cross or the Fed'ral Emergency Relief now.

"All this talk o' helpin' the farmer—that's just talk. All that's gettin' anything out o' the gov'ment is the landowner or them millionaires up east. All the politicians just take everything from the poor farmer an' give it to the millionaires. If this keeps up we'll just about start a revolution—like them Bahlsheviks."

Everywhere I went, throughout this section of the South, I heard the same grim threats to start a revolution "like them Bahlsheviks," as they pronounced it. Share-croppers in the depths of despair, starving, dependent upon charity, show signs of unrest greater even than before federal relief came to quiet things for those citizens who had enough to pay their poll tax and could thus vote. The government does not specify that you must vote to be eligible for a relief job,

but local politicians pass out the jobs and give them to those with the vote.

Outside a land-agent's office, a Federal Emergency Relief office, a Red Cross office, I almost invariably found small groups of overalled farmers with hard lights in their eyes.

"This country's just being run for them millionaires," they kept repeating. "Do you know what Huey P. Long says? He says the wealth of this country is in the hands of a dozen men—Rockefeller, Ford—that feller that Huey said was the real President when Hoover was there—what's his name?"

"Andrew Mellon," a farmer suggested.

"That's the one. Andrew Mellon. Huey Long says that Andrew Mellon used to tell Hoover what to do and by God! the President did it. That's what's the matter with this country. It ain't right for a few men to have all the wealth and the rest of us starving."

"Well, what can you do about it?"

"Start a revolution, that's what we can do. Them Bahlshviks did. They had the right idea. Why, do you know what they do over there? Everything that's made or grown is put in a government warehouse and if you need anything you just go and get it. If I got two children I get one sack of flour. If you got four children and need more, you get two sacks of flour. The government owns everything and gives it to them that needs it. If you got a lot of money the government takes it way from you and gives it to the poor. It ain't like here where twelve men got everything and the poor ain't got nothin'."

"Hell, ain't we living under a Socialist government now?" said another farmer, cutting a wide swathe with a mouthful of tobacco juice. "Ain't the government tellin' us how much we can plant and what we can sell it for? The only trouble is that the government's still being run for the millionaires. You know what Huey P. Long says? The wealth of this



country is in the hands of about a dozen men. Now, that ain't right—that they should have all them millions and we ain't got a sack of flour."

Huey Long's demagogic appeals to "limit the hours of toil—limit the size of fortunes" has struck a deep and sympathetic note in the farmers of Louisiana's neighboring state. They see a man in high office talk of revolution, confiscation, and they are talking of it now. They have no idea what a revolution is, or what they would do if one were thrown in their laps tomorrow, but they know they want a change.

The small landowner, the tenant farmer, renting farmer, and share-cropper have about reached the end of tolerance. The farmer says, "what we need is a revolution" but what he wants is some kind of change by which he can escape the domination of the landowner, the storekeeper, the banker, and the politician—and he doesn't much care whether that change is brought about by the ballot or the shotgun.

"Them millionaires up east—they're responsible," farmers told me repeatedly. "Everything's gone to them. The banks is bustin' with money and we're starving here."

"You fellows are talking about a revolution," I said. "Suppose you had one down here tomorrow—like the Bolsheviks. What would you do?"

They looked at each other; several smiled, the sort of smile a kid gives when he's caught in the pantry jam. They were at a loss.

"We ain't smart enough to know what to do," one finally said. "You got to have a leader to tell you. Trouble with us is we ain't got no leader."

The others nodded their heads in agreement.

"Well, suppose you yourselves suddenly started a revolution. What do you want? What would be the first thing you would do?"

They remained silent. Finally one said: "I'll tell you

what I'd do. There's three things I'd do. First, I'd pass a law so no man in this country could make more than a million dollars. Everything else he'd make, he'd have to give back to the poor—to them as needs it. Second, I'd pass a law so that no man who held public office would have the power to vote; that would break up the political machine. It's the political machine that's makin' it possible for all them millionaires to get their money at our expense. It's the political machine that runs the legislators an' they're not workin' for the poor man—they're workin' for the trusts and the big business man, them millionaires. And the third thing I'd do is pass a law so no man could sell stock that's worth \$1 a share for \$100 a share and take all the people's money and put it in the pockets of the millionaires."

"Is that all you'd do?"

He and the others thought a while.

"That would sure stop a lot of abuses right quick," the first man said.

"What would you do with your land?"

"Work it, of course," they said surprisedly.

"The Bolsheviks took all the land when they had their revolution. No more croppers. No more splitting fifty-fifty. The land was theirs."

"That would sure be fine if we could do that," said one.

There was a surprised air about him when he considered the possibility of seizing the land.

"That's right," another broke in. "The government can take away the land. They can confiscate slaves and tax your money. Why can't they take away the land and give it to the poor farmers?"

"Do you know what would happen if you tried to take the land away?" I asked. "The first thing you know the government would have the National Guard and Federal troops down here and shoot hell out of you."

They thought this over carefully. Finally one said, meditatively:

"I don't believe it. The National Guard is made up of our boys, our sons. They wouldn't shoot us down. They'd come over to our side."

"That's what the soldiers did in Russia, didn't they?" one farmer asked triumphantly. "When the Bahlsheviks made their revolution?"

"Yes, some of them did. But the government wouldn't send your own sons against you. It would send Northern soldiers down here and Southern soldiers up there so they'd have no relatives or friends to worry about. Then what would you do?"

"They'd send Northern soldiers down here to shoot us down because we want a revolution?"

"Well," said one, with a smile, "if the government done that, I reckon we'd have the War Between the States all over again."

So far as Roosevelt himself is concerned, the farmers have a great deal of admiration for him—even the charity-begging cropper. They feel that "he is trying" to do something for them. If he fails, they tend to blame not him but the "millionaire" who has become the symbol of the oppressor. They do not know what to do about this oppression; they are leaderless, as they frankly admit. They "are not smart enough to know what to do," but their bitterness is growing daily.

And at the other end of the continent, I met a ghost that once walked with firm tread through the Northwest woods. His steps were heard in Centralia, Walla Walla, Spokane, Seattle. . . . He reeled a little when I met him and in the half-darkness of the doorway where we found shelter from a raw March wind, he poked at me with a forefinger and talked of the yesterday which had been left so far behind.

He had come in from Ryderwood, the Long-Bell Lumber

Company camp in the heart of the vast forests. We bumped into each other in the narrow hallway of the Labor Temple on Longview's main and cheerfully lighted street. He eyed me disgustedly and spat a stream of tobacco juice on the wall.

"Just another scissorsbill," he said under his breath.

"You talk like a Wobbly," I laughed.

"You're God-damned right!" he said and clutched at the wall for support. "Those were the days when you got drunk because you were feeling good, not like today when you get drunk to forget that you're married."

"That's a good reason for getting drunk," I said sympathetically.

"You don't understand. I got a fine wife and two of the finest boys you can find anywhere. But when you're married you're not free—you can't pick up and tell the boss to go to hell, see? The wife and the kids got to eat, got to sleep, don't they?

"And that's where they get you. All these damned lumber companies. They all want married men now for their camps so there'll be no turnover. And when they get you there, they pay you less than when you're single. You know why? Because they know you can't pick up and beat it like you used to in the old days. You got to stay there because at least they give you a roof for yourself and your family."

He was in a talkative mood. When I suggested that we go upstairs, he shook his head vigorously.

"I want to talk here," he insisted. "I got to go upstairs later and see Jones—he's secretary of the Loggers and Sawmill Workers Union. I got to find out what the union's going to do about our carload of potatoes."

"Potatoes?"

"Yeah, potatoes. We chipped in and bought a carload of potatoes, but the company store made us sell it to them.



Now they're selling it back to us at a profit. Won't let us buy anything except in the company store."

Washington's life is the lumber industry. Half the population depends upon the forests and the mills for its living. Half the entire state's payroll comes from the lumber industry—or, rather, used to. When you learn that last year the lumber payroll was only one-fifth of the total state's payroll instead of the usual one-half, then you have an idea of what happened to workers' earnings so far as this industry is concerned. Since the depression, two out of every three who used to work in the industry have been unable to find work. Where this two-thirds of the lumber working population has gone, no one seems to know except to hazard the guess that they are in the big city breadlines or among the migratory workers who follow the crops on the West Coast.

"What do you make a week?" I asked.

"If I average \$15 I'm getting a big check," he growled. "And the cost of living has gone up so that it's impossible to make ends meet. I figured out once"—he poked me in the chest with a forefinger—"that me and my family needs \$5.50 a day just to meet living costs—and what I get is about half of that."

"Are you a member of the Logger's union?"

"Sure, but they're not doing anything."

"What are you doing about that?"

"I'm on my way now to tell Jones where he heads in."

"That'll help. What's happened to all the Wobblies around here? This used to be their stamping ground. The woods were full of them, a good, fighting bunch——"

"You bet they were," he interrupted heavily. "Good men—all of them. But they're shot now. Propaganda got 'em. Some of them's become Communists and some of them just hang around. More in the woods than in the mills."

"If this A. F. of L. union isn't doing anything, isn't there another that is?"

"Listen," he poked me vigorously in the chest with his pile-driver forefinger. "Nobody can do anything. I tell you nobody can do anything until seventy-five per cent of the scissorsbills are starving. Hit'm in the belly. Then you can talk revolution or anything else. Why"—he made a broad and vague motion with the palm of his hand—"the past few years did more for the Communists than all the propaganda they've spread since they started."

"Have you been hit in the belly?"

"Certainly I've been hit in the belly."

"What are you doing about it?"

"Nothing. I can't do anything alone."

"And the A. F. of L. union isn't doing anything. Then what's the matter with a Communist union?"

"I wouldn't have anything to do with them!" he exploded. "I went to some of their meetings. Don't do a damn thing except attack the I. W. W.'s. Say they didn't know how to organize. Well, we had the best organization——"

"You didn't survive, so maybe the accusation has some grounds," I suggested.

He was a little hazy about why he didn't like a Communist union. All he knew was that he did not like Communists in general.

"Did you ever hear them talk?" he demanded. "Capture the government! Fight on the barricades! Christ! I tell you nobody can do anything until most people are starving to death."

"What do you favor?"

"Blowing up their God-damned mills!"

"What good would that do?"

He thought for a minute and then laughed. "Nothing. Not a thing. But it would make me feel better."

"Suppose seventy-five per cent of the people were starving. Who will organize them?"

"They'll come together themselves."

"Do you believe in organization?"

"You're damned right I do."

"Why?"

"Because it's for my own benefit."

"Then why aren't you organizing your fellow workers?"

"There's no use. I've been all through it. Give these men thirty or forty dollars a week and that will ruin your best organization. There's no use until they're hit in the belly."

A dark figure loomed in the doorway, a youngster in his early twenties. My companion recognized him. He was a logger from Ryderwood, too. The three of us went upstairs. There were four men with Roger A. Jones, secretary of the Loggers and Sawmill Workers Union, behind the low wooden rail that fenced in his office. In the light I could see the face of the youngster who had come up with us. There was a reddish growth of beard on his chin and a grim set to his mouth. The Wobbly leaned heavily against the rail and started to poke a finger at the air.

"What the hell is this union doing?" he demanded beligerently. "I don't even get the hours I'm supposed to work!"

"There's been a lot of complaints about that," Jones assured him. "We're taking it up with the Compliance Board."

"But what are you doing about it?" the Wobbly insisted. "I came thirty miles to find out."

"You've found out," Jones said quietly.

"How do they feel?" I asked.

"They're bitter against the NRA—low wages and high living costs. Under the Raw Deal the hours have not been reduced appreciably so as to take up even a small part of the two-thirds in the industry who are out of employment. The companies have installed improved machinery which increased production fifty per cent. That eliminates thou-

sands of workers from ever getting jobs in this industry again."

"What are you doing about it?"

"We're waiting patiently for the President's next move."

The young logger who had come up with us leaned against the rail.

"And we'll wait just so long," he added dryly.

"I'm in favor of doing something right now," the Wobbly said. No one paid any attention to him.

"Suppose things don't get better?"

"Then there'll be a blow-up here that will make the rest of the country sit up and take notice," Jones said quietly. "Get this: we're not Wobblies or Communists. We don't believe in sabotage or in overturning the government. We're patriotic American citizens. We're backing the President 100 per cent. But he's got to show us pretty quick that he's going to give labor a break, instead of the companies all the time."

"And if they continue as is?"

"God only knows," the Loggers' secretary said seriously. Then he looked at me and smiled:

"There's a lot of sentiment around here for government control of industry."

"Meaning what?"

"Well, the people are the government. What's the matter with the workers running the industry?"

"The A. F. of L. will take your charter away from you so fast you won't know what happened."

"Charters are easy to print. We're the A. F. of L."

"Sounds like rebellion within the organization."

"There's no rebellion. We'll follow our leaders. We're good Americans. But when the President can't do anything for us—or won't—and the A. F. of L. in Washington can't—or won't—then we try something else."

"But wouldn't that be sovietizing the industry—like Russia?"



"We're drifting towards something. I don't know whether its sovietizing industry or what."

"And if we don't get the little we ask for we'll help the drifting along a little bit," the red-whiskered fellow added. "We're not doing anything yet. We damn near did before Roosevelt started to make promises. But we're not going to make the same mistake the I. W. W.'s made when everybody turned against them because they were causing trouble. We're going to wait and see; how long we can wait, I don't know. But when we start, no one will be able to say we didn't give the President all the chances he wanted. And when we start we'll go through with it."

"Through with what?"

"With everything. We cut the timber, we do the mill work, we ship it—we do every damn thing there is to be done except get the profits."

"You'll be shot down if you try something like that."

"It's a choice of being shot down or starving to death. I'll take mine standing up."

The others nodded their heads. There were smiles on their lips, grim sort of smiles and strength in the quiet way they spoke.

## XXI. THE ROAD TO THE BARRICADES

By the time this survey was finished I was convinced that if the average American worker were given a fairly decent living wage, the chances are that he would go through life working contentedly, rearing his children, going to the movies, and watching the baseball scores without much caring as to who runs the country or how. Only the force of economic circumstances has made this normally contented citizen restless and resentful.

I felt that should he once get the notion that he does not like the way the handful of men running the country's economic and political life are treating him, he is apt to take matters into his own hands with a fury which will astonish the world. The average worker is perfectly satisfied as long as he can earn a living. The troubles of the world do not bother him. He has little, if any, social conscience. The existence of a reasonable number of unemployed workers is regrettable, of course, and something should be done to give them a lift, but otherwise the American is indifferent to an economic system which offers great wealth to a few and poverty for the many.

It is when the number of these unemployed grows to unprecedented numbers and includes him, or when, despite his having a job, he still cannot make a living, that his anger rises. He was told that there was a depression and that everybody would have to suffer a bit before the country got out of it and he accepted it without a murmur. But as the depression continued and his wages were repeatedly cut while prices of commodities rose, as the speed-up was in-

stituted for those who could still find work, he grew sullen but still maintained a hopeful attitude. It was a bad depression, but "we had gotten out of depressions before." In recent years, he has looked to the "New Deal." The President had taken hold and was obviously with the workers, for he guaranteed them the right to organize and thus force employers to give them a living wage. But when he saw that Roosevelt's promise was as reliable as that of other Republican or Democratic politicians, when he saw that governmental bodies made decisions against him, he grew angry. When, to cap the climax, he discovered that during the period that he was asked to make sacrifices the employers made enormous profits, he became furious. The American has great faith in a President's promise and when he finds that the President cannot keep it, he feels that he has been kidded—and he does not like to be kidded.

The only leadership he had in his unions to enforce his insistence upon collective bargaining was the conservative one of A. F. of L. He resented radical organizations and still clung vaguely to the hope that something would turn up to rescue him from the ever-deepening mire of privation, for, at this period, the papers were assuring him that "the depression was over." With every published assurance that "the depression was over" things got worse, even as with every statement under Hoover that "prosperity was just around the corner" the stock market took another drop as an indication of the country's condition.

It was when "the depression was over"—that Toledo went ablaze.

There have been many strikes in various sections of the country which involved more men, were more bitterly fought, and had more casualties. National guardsmen, federal troops, and martial law have been used before to break strikes. The significance of Toledo does not lie in the bitter fighting there, but in the attitude of the strikers towards

their conservative leaders, the church, the legal authorities and the armed forces of the state, as well as the attitude of workers in industries not directly involved in the strike. The readiness of unemployed and employed workers to side with strikers of another industry in attacking the armed forces of the government, disclosed a trend which is growing today.

The long years of resentment and disillusionment produced a desperation that flamed against authority. Here, when they asked for bread they got bullets and they realized, somewhat dimly, that the state was using its power to protect the interests of the employing class; and with this realization they vented their pent-up bitterness upon the police and the soldiers who were the immediate defenders of the interests they had come to hate.

Late in February, 1934, in the fourth year of the depression, employees in the Auto-Lite factory in Toledo went on strike. It was but one of many strikes sweeping the country as a result of the "New Deal's" heralded aid to the workers. Government boards rushed in and the strike was settled with a guaranteed five per cent wage increase, the promise of an examination of complaints by an impartial labor board, and recognition of the union by April 1st.

The tendency of conservative union leaders and government bodies is to get striking workers back into the factories as quickly as possible. For the employers this move has many advantages: it is hard for workers to reawaken the first flush of rebellion; there is an opportunity to weed out the most dissatisfied elements, and to split the ranks of the union by winning a selected group of individuals by promises of concessions to them particularly.

The error the employer makes is in not realizing that strikes do not come from leaders, whether conservative or radical, but from conditions. If conditions which produce



a strike are not alleviated or changed, then the causes sooner or later will produce another strike.

The promises upon which the workers returned were not kept, and consequently the employees went out again in April. For five weeks the second strike continued without attracting much attention even in Toledo. Union leaders urged the workers to be patient. This inactivity and hunger at home gradually disorganized the solid front and worker after worker drifted back, defeated. Twelve hundred strikers were back in the factory while some 600 remained out, with the leaders still telling them that the government had guaranteed them the right to organize and for them to be patient.

Picketing was limited first to 6 and then to 25 men by court injunction and the efforts of the strikers to influence those who had gone back to work met with little success. It was at this period that the propaganda of a handful of Communists who had been somewhat active in the first weeks of the strike found fertile soil. The strikers had resented "radicals," but their conservative leaders were doing nothing, the government was doing nothing, the original terms of settlement were ignored; the courts had enjoined them from mass picketing and everything considered, the strike was dead, lost. In their desperation the strikers began to heed the Communist slogan of "smash the injunction by mass picketing."

This policy of the Communists to violate openly the courts' injunctions on picketing and their ability to get approval from the workers in these tactics is significant of the growing indifference to the duly constituted authorities. The worker is coming to feel that the courts represent employing-class interests. For the courts, mass violations of injunctions present a difficult problem. It is easy to send one or a dozen violators to jail, but when hundreds or thousands of men and women deliberately show contempt of court, to

send them to jail would necessitate establishing concentration camps. Jailing mass violators also leaves a political effect upon voters, which a judge must keep in mind if he wants to continue to sit on the bench.

This tendency to violate injunctions is affecting the attitude of the people towards the authority of the state. Before the liquor amendment went into effect the federal government and its officials were looked upon with considerable respect and fear, but when an effort was made to enforce a law disliked by the majority of our citizens, they deliberately violated it. A contempt for law developed, and this phenomenon is occurring now in the matter of injunctions.

As a result of these mass injunction-violations, the street fighting started which set Toledo ablaze. Popular sympathy was with the strikers. So uncertain were public officials of the reaction of local national guardsmen to shooting their striking fellow townsmen that the troops called to break the picket line were drawn from small towns a distance away from Toledo. Officials feared that local troops might fraternize with the strikers and refuse to shoot into them should it become necessary.

The military attempted to disperse the picket lines, and the resultant battles lasted some ten days. When tear- and vomiting-gas bombs hurled at the workers failed to halt them, orders were issued to shoot. Two workers were killed and many wounded. The area around the Auto-Lite factory became a no-man's land. The odor of the bombs hung heavy over the contested blocks. Inhabitants were ordered to evacuate their homes. Street lights were either shot out or broken to keep the region in darkness at night. Every window in the beleaguered factory was broken. Some of the machinery was smashed while workers singing and shouting tore up the streets for cobble stones to hurl at the soldiers. Throughout the days and the long nights the sound of exploding tear-

gas bombs mingled with the crack of rifles and the sirens of the police cars whirling madly about the contested area.

The forces of capitalism—the press, the radio, political officials, and the church massed their power to smash the strike by ending the resistance of the workers and their sympathizers. Bishop Alter of the Catholic Church pleaded and threatened:

“No matter what one may think of the calling of the troops, the fact is that they are here and that they represent lawfully constituted authority. To thwart them in the performance of duty or to attack them in any way violates the law of God and the law of the land. Let no one condone such conduct. . . . To my own people within the church, I solemnly declare such conduct is a grievous sin deserving the eternal reprobation. The quickest way to restore government to the civil authorities is to desist from every form of violence. For the rest let me urge my Catholic people and all my fellow citizens to stay out of the danger zone.”

Even the Catholics, however, felt that the soldiers were not there by the law of God, and that the laws of the land seem peculiarly to function for the benefit of the employing class, with the result that they continued attacking, despite the good bishop's threat.

Workers in other plants were bitter against the government's activities against the strikers, and Communist leaders crystallized this feeling to call for a general strike. Within a short period 83 local unions, affiliated with the A. F. of L., voted for it to support the strikers. The rising fury terrified the officials. Conservative labor leaders opposed the general-strike move, but were swept away in the storm of approval.

The strike finally ended with a partial victory for the workers before the general strike was called but the quickness with which otherwise conservative unions were ready to fight for and with their fellow workers left a profound



effect upon both capital and labor. The alignment of workers on a class basis and their attitude towards officials of the state and the state itself foreshadows serious fighting in the labor wars to come.

## II

In periods of unrest, political and industrial leaders sensitive to the temper of the workers grant concessions. In such periods, demagogues can and do ride to high political office by promising dissatisfied workers specific concessions should they be elected. A demagogue riding on the wave of popular dissatisfaction mirrors the workers' feelings by attacking the controlling interests. Such a leader, once in power, walks a tight rope. He can balance himself for a long period if nothing very disturbing occurs, but when a grave situation arises he must side either with capital or with labor. To side with labor means to use the machinery of the state to defend the workers' right to strike, to picket, to disrupt and eventually destroy capital's manufacturing and distributing system which the workers seize and operate for their own benefit instead of for the benefit of a minority of property-owners. This way leads to Communism. To side with capital means to use the same state machinery to defend the property-owners' interests, which necessitate breaking the strike. If the workers are sufficiently strong and determined, concessions may be given them to hasten the end of a strike, but they are concessions and nothing more. Liberalism is simply the approval of the granting of concessions and Minneapolis, in the two strikes of the truck-drivers in May and July, 1934, showed the impossibility of being "liberal" on the class-war front.

Political leaders who announce that they are for labor and bitter opponents of capitalism get headaches, like the forlorn Mayor of Hibbing, Minnesota, when he tried to figure out his course of action should hungry workers just take what



they wanted when those who had much refused to share. The issue was not quite that sharp when Governor Floyd B. Olson, "labor's man," got headaches when confronted with the two strikes. His actions marked the end of an epoch of tight-rope walking in handling labor problems.

In breaking a strike, the big issue is always "law and order," for the duly constituted authorities must guard the property of the employers and their legal right to employ strike-breakers. Struggles consequently develop between the upholders of "law and order" and the resentful workers. "Law and order" today functions chiefly for the benefit of the employing class. Hence, the problem faced by a "liberal" in office is in whose interests this "law and order" is to be maintained. The use of the police power of the state for the workers, followed to its logical conclusion, means overthrowing our whole present economic, political, and legal system.

The Twin Cities—Minneapolis and St. Paul—have a population of about one million. Their influence includes a 100-mile radius of a fairly well-populated area where the workers are dominated by the elevator and milling combines, the power monopoly, and the railroads. In the wastes of the northern part of the state, the Oliver Iron Mining Co., a subsidiary of the United States Steel Corp., is pretty much supreme. Duluth, where the Great Lakes transportation system carries tons of ore and wheat to the rest of the world, also is a tremendous industrial center. In the early years of capitalism's struggle to wrest wealth from the region, the workers were oppressed to an unusual degree and their resentment found its expression in radical tendencies. Labor organizations, after long and bitter struggles, flourished. Their development was the only way the workers could, in a measure, defend their interests.

The area was dominated by the Republican and Democratic parties. When these organizations failed to secure concessions demanded by the workers, the resultant disillusion-

ment ended in the formation of a Farmer-Labor Party, the leaders of which denounced the "capitalist system," "monopolies," and the "hounds of Wall Street." The phrases sounded swell and workers flocked to the banners of the new party, which was swept into office. These phrases, in somewhat shriller tones, still float around the state. To one not aware of the function of the Farmer-Labor Party as a sort of fourth-line trench of capitalism, these phrases would give the impression that here, at last, is a "labor government."

The leaders in this state's political life received much of their early training in the Socialist Party, which was once considered the most militant political group in the United States. The Secretary of State went to prison during the World War for opposing conscription, workers showed mass opposition to the war as a "capitalist war." Liberal groups are not only tolerated but actually welcomed with open arms. Minnesota is the most "liberal" state in the union, loudly fighting the "vested interests."

But neither the governor, who is the titular head of the new party, nor the party itself can do very much even if they wish to. Olson and his whole state machinery are as helpless as the befuddled, unhappy mayor of Hibbing. If the "labor" governments' officials tried to use the police power of the state to defend the workers' interests against those of the property-owners, whose possessions they are sworn to defend, the governor and his aids would be impeached.

With this in mind let us proceed to the strike of the General Drivers, Helpers and Inside Workers Union, Local 574, affiliated with the Minneapolis Trades and Labor Assembly, a conservative body controlled by the A. F. of L.

The first strike lasted about a week. The union was led by labor leaders who played with the "labor" governor as one fighting for labor's interests. The leaders called themselves Communists. Actually they are Trotskyites, or, fol-

lowers of Trotsky's theory of world revolution. They were not the kind of labor leaders who would sell out to employers for a stated sum as other union leaders have done, but they had only a hazy notion of the function of a "labor" governor in a capitalist state, and consequently led their followers to a "victory" which was really defeat.

When the first strike was called, some 4,000 truck drivers were involved. The employers refused to negotiate and, picking the commission market as the place to break the strike, tried to move trucks there under a police squad. The strikers attacked bare-handed and though the trucks were stopped from moving, the workers were pretty thoroughly clubbed. From then on both sides used clubs.

The Citizen's Alliance hired 1,500 special police to re-enforce the regulars and warned strikers to stay away from the market. They didn't, and before they finished, the regular police disarmed the special deputies who were subsequently withdrawn. The fighting was sharp, and popular sympathy was so in favor of the strikers that for a period it looked as though a general sympathetic strike was in the offing. It was then that Chief of Police Johann proposed a truce which was accepted. The settlement gave the strikers union recognition, assurance of protection against discrimination, and a board of arbitration to adjust wages and hours.

Arbitration usually results in the workers getting the worst end of it. Those on the arbitration board rarely seem to find things in favor of labor; hence, the deep suspicion held by a large class of workers of arbitration, especially by government bodies.

Once the strikers were back to work, the employers, even as in Toledo, saw no reason to abide by too much of the agreement. Strikers and their leaders were discriminated against, no raise in pay was granted, which was the original reason for the strike, and the union was extended a questionable "recognition."



Since the conditions which produced the strike were not remedied, another was inevitable when the drivers and their helpers realized that they had been tricked. On July 17, when the second strike was called, not an employer's truck moved into or through Minneapolis. Food supplies, however, were delivered by farmers, operating under permits from the strike committee, not only to hospitals and public institutions but to workers' homes and the city markets. A few trucks which employers tried to move were promptly wrecked by determined strikers and the contents littered over the roads and the streets, while citizens not directly involved watched with hearty approval.

Minneapolis, where the unemployed had stormed the city hall to demand adequate relief and were given tear-gas bombs instead, was not in a mood to trifle. Fights developed with the police routed. The employers mobilized all forces possible for the struggle—middle-class business men, college boys, and hired strike-breakers to guard the movement of trucks. Strike pickets repulsed them and in the fighting many were injured on both sides. On one occasion C. A. Lyman, a well-known business and club man, had his brains spilled by a whack on the head from a baseball bat. Normally this would have resulted in a great hue and cry by the authorities, but this clubman's death was passed off as quietly as possible. The people were with the strikers and the officials did not want to stir up an already grave situation.

Feeling ran high with workers in unaffected industries realizing that agreements were "made on paper" when it suited the employers and that consequently their own security was at stake. Talk of a general strike spread again, not only in Minneapolis but in St. Paul, which was even better organized. Local after local voted to show their solidarity with the truck drivers.

The governor was faced with the problem of using the police power of the state to protect the workers' right to



picket or the employers' right to try to break the strike by running trucks. The tight-rope walker had to side with either labor or capital, and he ordered the national guard mobilized, "to protect the strikers," as the union leaders explained to their members.

Under the rifles of the national guard, employers' trucks began to move. Troops raided the union headquarters and arrested its leaders and active members. Picketing was dispersed and the strike broken.

The "labor" governor was faced with surrendering to labor and using the armed forces of the state to protect the workers, or surrendering to capital and using the same forces to break the strike. He made the decision which today is inevitable and which marks the end of pretences to "liberalism" in future labor wars.

### III

On the morning of July 16, 1934, the streets of San Francisco were strangely quiet. Not a street car was in sight. Stores were closed. A few lone automobiles wandered through the still thoroughfares, but the majority had been left in garages, for there was no gas or oil to be had. The bustle of the business world had ceased.

The workers of the city had said that they would not work, they would not turn a wheel of the vast and complicated industries they operated so smoothly that the people had come to accept it as a state as natural as turning a faucet and instantly getting water to drink. The only trucks that moved through the streets did so with permits from the strike committee, carrying food to hospitals and institutions caring for the helpless, to hotels and restaurants where transients, caught in the class war, could eat.

Hundreds of thousands of the inhabitants walked about wonderingly. A silence as of impending doom hung over the great metropolis. From Third Street to the Embarcadero,

curving like a gigantic half moon along San Francisco's waterfront, marched 4,500 men in khaki uniforms with pistols in holsters and rifles on their shoulders. Uniformed policemen stood about with a worried air. Along the streets, twisting and winding about the harbor, bayonets fixed to rifles glistened in the summer sun. They were guarding the ships tied to the docks and those others anchored helplessly out in the harbor, for the workers had refused either to load or unload them.

The average American is bored by union activities. He has little interest in them, especially in unions composed of truck drivers, street-car motormen, and milkmen. There is little glamor about a street-car motorman or a truck driver—certainly not as much as about a coal miner with his lamp and pick deep in the bowels of the earth. There is little to capture the imagination in a rough truck driver or a tired street-car motorman who goes home to his family after a day's work of starting and stopping and clanging his bell. We see them every day all around us and we accept them as we accept the existence of paved streets.

We rarely consider that if the street-car conductors refused to man the cars that not all of the marvels of an electric and machine age would do us a bit of good; that if we could not get gas or oil our highly intricate and marvelously functioning automobiles would be of as much value to us as the original ore from which they were so skillfully fashioned; or if the milk drivers refused to deliver milk in the morning we would have none unless we had a cow in the backyard; and if the much cursed-at truck drivers folded their gnarled hands and refused to transport produce from farms to wholesalers and retailers, that our neighborhood stores would have no vegetables, meat, fruits, or any of the innumerable things which we accept as naturally as breathing.

When the day comes that these workers fold their arms and refuse to function in the multitudinous activities which

is our civilization, then street cars stop and the people walk; milk sours in the farmers' cans, vegetables rot, meat hangs in storage plants. It is then that we realize our utter dependence upon those who do the work.

That is what the San Francisco Bay region realized in the general strike in which 200,000 workers folded their arms. The 1,300,000 people living in the area, whose lives had run so smoothly, found themselves helpless without the activity of those who did the work.

More significant than just the strike of dissatisfied workers was the whole-hearted support given the strikers by a hundred thousand workers not directly involved. The tendency perceptible in Toledo and Minneapolis of workers in industries not affected by a strike, to line up with striking workers on a class basis, was fulfilled in a powerful demonstration of working-class solidarity.

With the exception of a few more radical organizations like the Marine Workers Industrial Union, the strike was led by conservative union men, affiliated with the American Federation of Labor. The strike was the culmination of long grievances. San Francisco's waterfront was honey-combed with "hiring halls" controlled by shipping and stevedoring companies, where sailors, stevedores, and others engaged in the maritime industry were given jobs. For years, dissatisfaction had been growing among the workers at this control, for anyone who met with the displeasure of the companies could not get work. In the heyday of prosperity, it was not so bad, for workers who got fairly good pay were not particularly interested in organizing; but with the economic distress which began in 1930, the terrific drop of imports and exports affected shipping companies, which instituted a series of wage cuts. When efforts were made to organize against these wage decreases, those who were known to be union men found it impossible to find employment. It was not until Roosevelt's much-publicized guarantee of the right



to organize under section 7-A that there was a tremendous spurt in membership and the unions decided to protest the hiring halls which had assumed the function of a company union.

The essence of the entire fight was the open and closed shop, and in the effort to break the strike the cry of "Communism" and "insurrection" was raised by the employers, for Communists had stimulated sentiment for the general strike despite the opposition of the conservative labor element. San Francisco employers realized that it was not merely a strike of ten maritime unions. For the companies to lose this strike meant that workers would organize into their own unions. All labor in the city would be affected, and employers got behind the Industrial Association which acted as a clearing-house for employer activities in an effort to break the strike.

The great mass of workers was in a rebellious mood not only against the employers but against the conservative leaders who played with the political and industrial powers of the region. Conservative leaders were willing to "talk reasonably" around a table and the end of such talks usually meant a lowered wage scale. Communist organizers, though weak numerically, saw the workers' mood and went to A. F. of L. locals to point out the need of a sympathetic strike. Union after union voted for it. The opposition by conservative leaders to the general-strike sentiment alienated the rank and file until it threatened conservative union control. It was only then that the old leaders decided to go along and in this way secured key positions on the strike committee where they could bring the general strike to an end as soon as possible.

The swing of the rank and file to the suggestions of a radical minority is significant. The same tendency was perceptible in Toledo and Minneapolis. The readiness to break away from the tight reins held by conservative leaders means



that if A. F. of L. leaders pursue a similar policy of opposing the militant desires of their members in the coming struggles, either this type of leader will be eliminated or the A. F. of L. will break up.

The knowledge that radical leadership is seriously affecting conservative union membership is one of the chief reasons why the A. F. of L. is so bitter against Communists and helps raise the cry of "reds" whenever a more militant leadership affects their control. In San Francisco, driven frantic by the swing to the left, American Federation of Labor leaders helped raise the cry of "Communists and insurrection," and thus cooperated with the employers who were trying to split the ranks of the workers—the first step in breaking the strike.

The general strike was a declaration of class war. On one side was the massed power of the workers and their determination not to let strike-breakers function and thus endanger the outcome. On the other side, the tremendous forces of the ruling class were organized, forces which included the means of communication—a powerful factor in moulding popular opinion. When faced with the clear issue of a choice between capital and labor, the press and the radio promptly took a position of defending the interests of the employing class. Since the best way to split the ranks of the workers was to create the impression that the strike had other motives than a bread-and-butter issue, the cry of "reds" and "insurrection" was raised. The papers were filled with allegations that the general strike had been fomented by "reds" as the first step to capture the government. Since the average American worker has little conception of the economic system which forces the employer to cut wages and lay off men, he is willing to fight desperately against his employer and even the state for immediate concessions; but that is as far as he wants to go. He has no desire for a revolution. He has a hazy notion that all revolutions are

imported by long-bearded, unwashed men, with the exception of the American revolution—but that was different. That was because England tried to sell us tea when we wanted to drink coffee.

For years the employing-class-controlled press have dinned into us the idea that “reds” are aliens working for Moscow and that the whole idea of revolution is dreadful; that wherever one found a “red,” one found an enemy of the United States. When the press and the radio, politicians and conservative union leaders raised the cry of “reds” and vehemently asserted that the purpose of the strike was to start a revolution so a few members of the left-wing Marine Workers Union could capture the government, the cry had its effect.

The only newspaper which attempted to counteract these attacks was the *Western Worker*, official organ of the Communist Party on the West Coast. This paper, a weekly with a circulation of about 10,000, was influential in its own small circle but had little influence among the great mass of strikers. Nevertheless, its persistent exposure of officials, both political and labor, made it a thorn in the side of the Industrial Association, and a group of marauders, disguised as police officers, descended upon the plant, and wrecked the printing press.

Backed by enormous sums of money and with virtually all the means of communication in their control, the Industrial Association directed the onslaught.

The attack, concentrated upon the Communists, had a three-fold objective. One, the Communists were the most militant of the organizers and so long as they were active, conservative labor leaders were helpless to stem the rank and file swing to the left. Destruction of this militant leadership would leave the field clear to conservative officials who had played ball before with the employers. Two, the “red” cry split the solid ranks of the workers by throwing doubt

upon the real reasons behind the strike. And three, these persistent cries affected public opinion and slowly turned it from a tolerant, if not actually a friendly attitude, toward the strikers into a hostile one.

A wave of terror was turned loose. Known Communists and their sympathizers were beaten, Communist centers were raided and destroyed. Wholesale arrests were made of radicals. The truth could not be gotten in the capitalist press, even in those papers which had championed the right of the workers to organize. Pretensions to liberalism were forgotten and day in and day out, stories appeared which were so patently untruthful that in a normal period not even a reactionary editor would have passed them by his desk. Statements from the strikers and their representatives were garbled or suppressed. It was class war and the employing class was not troubled by the ethics of a normal period.

Once the propaganda barrage was well under way and the 1,300,000 citizens in the Bay Region almost convinced that the strike was Moscow-inspired, the employers collected strike-breakers to load and unload the ships tied up in the harbor. This contingent was composed chiefly of ruined middle-class business men who did not realize that they too had been victimized by the same economic system which the strikers were fighting, a few mercenaries like American Legion men and professional strike-breakers. Their appearance produced the inevitable consequences. The furious strikers rushed trucks, overturned them and strewed the contents on the streets. The police attacked. Tear-gas bombs exploded. Rocks were hurled at the police and in one of these fights the police fired and two strikers were killed.

Many events in history, when circumstances were ripe, were touched off by a comparatively small event which under other conditions would have produced little repercussion. So it was with the killing of these two pickets. News of it electrified the strikers. Twenty thousand workers packed



an auditorium in a bitter protest. Mayor Rossi tried to calm them by addressing the meeting and was booed out of the hall. They did not want to listen to the man whom they held responsible for the deaths.

Under this tension, 40,000 workers turned out in a mass protest for the funeral of the two strikers. Tens of thousands lined the streets as the grim-faced men and women marched behind the cortege carrying their dead. The slightest provocation on this day could have produced a massacre and those in charge of the police realized it, for not one was visible on the long line of march. The workers looked as though they had taken over the city in a demonstration of solidarity which death had given them.

Death on the class-war front seems to draw the workers together more closely than all the exhortations of their leaders. These mass demonstrations which grew more frequent during the strike waves of the last few years as in Toledo, Minneapolis, Honea Path, South Carolina, and Woonsocket, R. I., closely approach a general strike without actually being one. In almost every instance where workers have been killed on the picket line, large masses have joined together to show their solidarity with those who gave their lives.

These demonstrations affect the attitude toward the state of the strikers and those who line the streets in silent sympathy with them. The people have been taught that the state functions for their benefit and when confronted by those who died because the state's police power was used to defend property rights, the antagonism to the state and its police power is inevitable. While the funeral cortege winds its way through southern cotton mill towns, automobile-factory regions, produce areas, the workers are burying not only their dead; they are burying, too, just a little more of their respect for the duly constituted authorities and their interpretation of "law and order." There is a perceptible



feeling that the state is the instrument of the employing class. When this conception of the state becomes a mass conviction the workers will overthrow the state.

When conservative leaders will not direct the workers along the road they wish to follow, when workers feel that the state functions to protect a handful of men who draw tribute from them for the right to earn food, then the day of bitter street-fighting looms. As Toledo went ablaze with the fury of desperate workers, as Minneapolis saw liberal pretensions washed away in the tide of class war, so San Francisco pointed the way to the long, bloody road of future labor struggles. Not always will capitalism be able to deflect the attention of the workers from the strike issues by the cry of "reds and insurrection." Such cries will work for a time, but sooner or later the repeated disillusionment will make workers chary.

The economic scene is more muddled today than it was at the beginning of the depression. Workers and employers, driven apart by the sharp cleavage of opposing interests, are massing their forces to protect themselves. And as increasing wage cuts, unemployment, hunger and misery line up the workers in desperation and as the employing class prepares to defend its property, profits, and power, it becomes clear that America faces the barricades.











